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FEATURE STORY

A MASKED MYSTERY

BY

POLICE-SERGEANT KELLY

"THE BLACK SOUL," BY BEULAH POYNTER, IS OUR NEXT FEATURE STORY

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY — PAGE

A MASKED MYSTERY, by Police Sergeant Kelly.. 1

SERIAL STORY

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER, by Police Captain Howard 39

SHORT STORIES

THREE PARTNERS AND THREE GAMES, by Philip Verrill Mighels..... 29
A CASE OF KIDNAPPING, by Annie Louise Kinsella 32
MRS. HARLEY'S GOVERNESS, by Emma Van Horn 35
STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES, by A New York Journalist..... 38

MISCELLANEOUS MATTER

Plastic Mold for Injured Men..... 31
Mystery of the Indian Rope Trick..... 34
Peruvian Bookkeeping..... 37

CURRENT NEWS

Vast Distance—Castor Oil—Man Fights Jellyfish—Seeing in the Dark—To Tell Thrift Stories—Wonderful Clocks—The Salt in Salt Lake—The Dingo—How Counterfeiters Are Caught..... 42

A MASKED MYSTERY

AN EXCITING DETECTIVE STORY

By POLICE SERGEANT KELLY

PROLOGUE

PART FIRST

NEPHEW AND NIECE

A COLD and dreary September night found John Ruddyglow lying in bed dying, after a busy life of fifty years at business in New York.

The old banker lay in a darkened room on the second floor of his home on the east bank of the Hudson river. Not a soul was with him.

The apartment was large, magnificently furnished, and was at the front of the house; the bed stood in an alcove and the dying man was wide awake.

His hair and beard were as white as his haggard face, his eyes were hollow, feverish, and encircled by dark rings, and he had his glance fastened upon a small table beside the bed, upon which stood two tumblers, covered with saucers, in which rested two spoons with which to take his medicine.

The dim lights lent the apartment a shadowy appearance, and the mournful sighing of the wind that swept across the murky river added to the lonesomeness and air of desolation that pervaded the place in a most harrowing manner.

An ormolu clock on the mantel struck eight, and the sick man listlessly counted the strokes, when suddenly the heavy velvet portieres at one of the side windows fluttered and a sash was softly closed, the slight sound passing unnoticed by the invalid.

Then the curtains were slightly parted, and for an instant the face of a man appeared in the opening.

The intruder, who had evidently climbed up the grape arbor to get in the window, shot one rapid glance around the room, and then seeing the hall door opening, he vanished like a flash.

The man's face was not a bad one.

He wore a derby hat and a turned-down collar, his hair was closely cut, and his features were rather angular, the face being close shaven, the grayish blue eyes having a singularly keen, piercing expression, and the short sharp nose and firm chin denoting an immense amount of self-will.

"Some one is coming," he muttered as he crouched back behind the portieres.

His further soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance into the room of a young girl of eighteen, attired in a black dress that set off her rounded figure to advantage, and contrasted the whiteness of her skin most strongly.

She had golden hair, done up in a coil on her regal little head, an oval face with a dimpled chin, straight dark eyebrows, a pretty nose, and laughing eyes shaded by jet lashes.

The girl was Maud Post, the old banker's niece. She walked quietly to the bedside, stooped over, imprinted a kiss upon her uncle's wan, pale face, and said in musical tones:

"You are sleepless yet, I perceive, Uncle John."

"Oh, Maud! My darling child—my poor little orphaned pet. I am so glad you have come to keep me company for a little while," replied the sick man in feeble accents. "It is so lonesome here that you brighten the atmosphere like a ray of gladsome sunshine."

He spoke gaspingly, as if it pained him to speak, but his feverish eyes kindled upon sight of the girl with a look that eloquently portrayed the deep love he entertained for her.

"Come! You must cheer up now," she replied, "for I do not like to see you looking so despondent, uncle dear."

The sick man shook his head mournfully.

"There is no use," said he pathetically. "I am doomed."

"No—no—no! You will soon recover your health and——"

"Do not blind yourself with a hopeless delusion, child. I am a dying man, and I feel satisfied that before the dawn of another day my eyes will be closed forever! Do not start—let not the rose blushes fade from your sweet cheeks—it is the sad truth."

Tears sprang to the girl's eyes, and she muttered:

"Oh, what strange malady is it that is killing you this way, my only friend—my more than father?"

"Malady?" echoed the old man bitterly. "I do not know. Even the doctor, I can see, is baffled to understand my case, although he pretends to do so. And he will stick to his obstinate convictions. Were I to die this minute he would swear that I perished of the disease of which he has made a diagnosis, and would issue his burial certificate accordingly. And all because he is obstinate in his convictions, and too proud to own up to an error of judgment."

"Family physician as he is," replied the girl earnestly, "if you are convinced that he does not understand your case, why do you not let me call in another physician?"

"Well," said the sick man wearily, "perhaps after all I exaggerated the case. Maybe I will be better by to-morrow with the new medicine he left. If not I will let you send for another doctor. I've been sick two weeks now. It makes me nervous and irritable, I suppose. But never mind about me for the present. Have you been out? I see you carry your bonnet in your hand."

The girl glanced at her hat, laid it down, and sitting on the edge of the bed, she replied:

"Yes; I have been to the village."

The girl started, changed color, and replied hesitatingly:

"Oh, I only went to see a friend."

The sick man noticed her agitation and frowned.

"Maud!" he exclaimed.

She jumped, glanced timidly at her uncle, and said:

"Well?"

"You went to meet young Doctor Harvey."

The accusation was so direct and she so honest that the truth could not be hidden by evasion or lies.

"I did," she slowly admitted.

Then she looked as if she expected a reproach. It came.

"Beware of that man!" solemnly said Mr. Ruddyglow. "He is a viper despite his courteous and fascinating polish, his honeyed tongue and great presumption. I have warned you against him. He impressed me unfavorably the first time your cousin James Hawkins brought him here. He is just the sort of man to win the love of a girl of your character and then ruthlessly crush it. His being the most intimate friend of my nephew, James, is enough to show me that he is no fit companion for you."

"But, uncle, he is trying to make a better man of Jim."

"Bosh! nonsense! Birds of a feather flock together."

"Indeed! indeed, uncle, you are harsh to judge——"

"Silence one moment! Pause and ponder at what I say ere it is too late. I observed that he was paying rather strict attention to you in the past. Shun that man, I say. No good will ever come of my nephew. He has too often abused my confidence after all the good I have done him. And now he is disinherited. I will not leave him a cent. All I own is willed to you—every copper. But to preclude the chance of you marrying Doctor Harvey, I have so fixed my will that if you do all my wealth goes to a public institution."

The girl arose and turned her face away to hide the look of emotion her uncle's words brought there, and said:

"You are cruel, unjust, in your estimate of Harvey."

"No!" replied the sick man emphatically. "He is a villain! I can see it in his eyes."

"Uncle! how dare you!" she cried, turning suddenly and fiercely toward the old man and stamping her foot.

"She loves him, as I suspected—as I suspected," he groaned in embittered tones. "And I have warned her so often. I have been so kind to her since in her infancy her parents died and left her to my care, as did the parents of James. She was nurtured to a beautiful, budding flower, while he grew like the wild thorn——"

Sobs checked his further utterance, and covering his face with his hands, he turned away from the pale-faced girl.

"Uncle John, forgive me for causing you this annoyance," she cried, imploringly, as she fell upon her knees beside the bed.

Then he turned around, and said, gently:

"Heaven knows I mean all for the best for you, my poor darling. Soon you may not have my protection, and will be exposed to the manifold perils of entire orphanage. I only wish to do what I can for you, so that you may be able to overcome any troubles that might beset your path. But there—there—the clock has struck the half hour, and it is time for me to take my medicine. You can give it to me. It tastes far sweeter when taken from your dear hand."

The girl was weeping, but she arose and gave him a teaspoonful from one of the tumblers, saying:

"I know you have all my interests, at stake, uncle."

"Then swear to me that you will hold no further intercourse with Doctor Harvey. It is the last request of your poor old uncle—hold up your right hand and swear it, for I would go to my grave uneasy if you refuse."

The pallor on the girl's face intensified.

"At least grant me one privilege," she pleaded.

"Name it," replied her uncle, in some surprise.

"It is that I may have some proof of his perfidy before I take the vow you wish so earnestly to impose on me."

For an instant the dying man pondered, his feverish glance fixed upon the girl with a far-away expression.

Then, as if inspired with some subtle intuition by his near approach to final dissolution, he half arose and cried:

"Your wish is granted. Within a short time Heaven will lay bare to you that man's evil nature. I know it as a dying man."

His words were uttered in such prophetic tones that the girl involuntarily shivered, and raising her right hand heavenward she said in tones of solemn truth:

"Upon conviction of Edward Harvey's perfidy, I swear, as I hope for salvation, to have nothing to do with him."

Ruddyglow was satisfied. An exultant expression swept over his emaciated face.

"You have done well," he said. "Now go. I will try to sleep."

"May God bless you, dear uncle," said the girl. And kissing him upon the forehead, she glided out of the room and went downstairs. The man behind the window curtains was just about to come from his place of concealment when he was startled by hearing a door open at the end of the room. It was a door that communicated with the rear apartment.

"Some one else is coming," the hidden man muttered. "I must not be seen here or Jim Hawkins may discover that I am shadowing him as a 'suspect' in the diamond robbery of Betsy Trotwood in the city. Perhaps if I remain here I may learn more of the inside history of this household. It is very evident that Hawkins' uncle already knows that the young man is a hard case, for he has disinherited him in favor of that lovely girl. And the young doctor is distrusted strongly by the old man. Yet, all I know wrong of him is that he associates with Hawkins, and for that reason I took the trouble to find out that he is located in the village of Fernville, in the back of this place. Who is coming now?"

He drew back, listened and cautiously peered out. The newcomer was a young man of twenty-eight. He was tall, well built, stylishly dressed, wore a silk hat, light overcoat and carried a cane. His face was round, his nose a perfect pug; he had black hair, eyes, eyebrows, eyelashes, mustache and goatee. There was an air of sang-froid about him which at once stamped him as an impudent, reckless man, while the expression of his face denoted a nature filled with cunning, brutality and treachery.

"Jim Hawkins, the banker's nephew," the concealed detective—for such was his profession—muttered. He knew the young man very well. Mr. Ruddyglow looked up at the newcomer, and a shade of extreme annoyance crossed his pallid face.

"You back here again?" he muttered, unamiably.

"Couldn't keep away. See the point?" replied Hawkins with a harsh, discordant laugh. "How do you feel, old fellow?"

The annoyed look on the invalid's face intensified into a dark expression of anger at his nephew's insolence.

"I wish," said he, sternly, "not to be troubled with you any longer. I have once cast you out and forbid you to ever cross the threshold of my house again, but you seem to have forgotten it. Must I repeat what I once said?"

"Oh, 'tain't necessary," was the cool reply, as Hawkins lazily flung himself into a chair near the bedside and lit a cigar. "I'm not so forgetful. It was beastly mean of you, though. See the point? I ain't half as bad as you think me. Besides, I heard what you just said to my pretty cousin. Was in the next room while you were gabbing. It's kinder tough to get such treatment from one's only relative, I can tell you—more especially as you're the only one on whom I set my expectations in regard to a snug sum when you peg out."

He laughed again as he said this, half sarcastically.

"You can expect nothing from me!" exclaimed Mr. Ruddyglow sharply. "You long ago forfeited your right to anything."

"But consider," said his nephew; "this is your last chance. S'pose you die sudden, without providing for yours truly, what a hole I would be in, wouldn't I? I shudder to think of the short space of time you have got left to do the generous. Better change your will. Fix it so I can have your dough in case Maud marries."

"I repeat that I won't do anything for you."

"That's mighty cold-blooded of you, old man. Here's a poor orphan, with nothing but his wits and lots of expectations, and you won't forget and forgive—see the point? Now, I came up here from the city expressly to have this chin with you, and I ain't going away empty-handed."

"You may as well stop talking and leave me," the invalid replied as he drew a paper from beneath his pillow and held it up. "This is my will—I had it drawn up today, and it shall not be altered in the remotest degree."

"Hand it over," said Hawkins, reaching out his hand. "I'd like to see what it says, and make arrangements for you to alter it a trifle—see the point?"

"No!" responded Mr. Ruddyglow, replacing the paper under the pillow. "For the last time dissuade yourself of any hopes that you may have. The servants tell me you have come here every night for two weeks past and occupied your old suite of apartments. I now wish you to vacate them and take up your quarters elsewhere."

"I won't do it!" replied Hawkins, coolly.

"Then I shall have you forcibly ejected."

"No need. You will probably croak to-night. Let me stay. That isn't much. I want to shed a few tears, too."

A threatening look came over Mr. Ruddyglow's face, and he reached out to a bell-button, and exclaimed:

"Go! Go! Your heartlessness disgusts me. I will stand no more of it. This is outrageous of you—shameful. Now I will allow you two minutes to save yourself from a disgraceful scene."

Hawkins arose to his feet, a sneering smile on his face. He lifted up one side of his coat, thrust his right hand in his hip-pocket, and drew out a small vial. It was labeled aconite—one of the deadliest of poisons. Then he flung a stylographic pen on the counter-pane, and said:

"Write a codicil to that will on its back. Annul all you have bequeathed to Maud. Make it all over to me. If you refuse, I will pour this poison in one of these tumblers of medicine and force you to drink it. In a few minutes you would die."

"Great heavens! You are jesting!" gasped the sick man.

He arose to a sitting posture, intensely horrified, his eyes widely distended. Hawkins poured part of the medicine out on the floor from one of the glasses, then he set the tumbler down, exclaiming:

"No. That would give me away, perhaps. You will

drink it from this vial direct. Now, your answer, old fellow?"

For an instant the sick man hesitated, then he cried hoarsely:

"Do your worst! I refuse!"

He was just going to call for help when his nephew sprang upon him with the fury of a wild beast, clutched him by the throat, forced him back upon the bed, and thrust the vial in his mouth.

"Comply! It is death to refuse!" he hissed.

"No!" gasped the sick man as he weakly struggled to get free.

"Then perish!" ground out the desperate man.

He was about to tip the vial up, when the hidden man rushed out from behind the curtains, and uttering a started cry, Hawkins dropped the vial on the floor.

Mr. Ruddyglow fell back heavily on the bed. He was dead!

PART SECOND

POISON

TOM WONDER, the detective, flung Jim Hawkins upon the floor, glanced at the old banker, saw that he had expired, and stooping down he picked up the vial.

One glance at the inspiration on the label showed him that the contents were poison.

Hawkins arose to his feet and Tom clapped a hand on his shoulder and exclaimed:

"You are my prisoner, sir."

"Eh? Oh, come now. Don't! I haven't done anything!"

"You have killed that man!"

"Bosh! Don't be a clam. I didn't—see the point?"

"But I saw you clutch him by the throat."

"Well, that didn't fix him."

"You put this vial of poison in his mouth——"

"Ah, git out! Look at it. It isn't uncorked!"

The detective started, glanced at the neck of the vial and saw that the man had told the truth. The cork was yet in the tiny bottle.

"So it is!" the detective exclaimed involuntarily.

"Then let go of me! The old guy died of fright, or else the effect of his queer disease took a bad turn."

"I am going to keep you in my hands now until the death of that old man has been investigated by a coroner's jury. There is something very queer about it—something decidedly queer."

"Oh, he's been complaining for two weeks now—see the point? Naturally he had to plug out sooner or later."

"Well, Hawkins, you know me, don't you?"

"Reckon I do. You're Tom Wonder."

"And you know I am not here for nothing."

"I'd swear by it—see the point? Why are you here anyway?"

"I've been shadowing you."

"Of course. I know that now. But what for?"

"Some crooked business of yours. Have you got any of Betsy Trotwood's diamonds pocketed in your jeans just now?"

Hawkins fairly jumped, his teeth suddenly snapped together, and a look of blank alarm swept over his face which the detective did not fail to observe. It made Wonder laugh outright.

"Don't be a clam," said Hawkins, in shivering tones, as his hand involuntarily made a gesture toward his breast pocket. "You are completely off on that score."

The detective noticed this gesture, and chuckled inwardly.

"So you have got some of the booty in your clothing, have you?" he laughed. "Now, Hawkins, don't deny it. Just hand the swag over to me easy and comfortable like a good fellow and it will save you a heap of trouble. Come—out with it, my boy, out with it."

As the detective spoke he thrust his hand into the man's breast pocket and pulled out a small package. A cry of consternation escaped the detective's prisoner, and he made a snatch for the package.

"That's mine," he panted. "Fork it over!"

"Oh, no! I must see what it contains first," Wonder replied as he started back and tore open the paper.

A diamond ring fell out in his hand, and the contents of the parcel was evidently a lot more of jewelry mounted with the same kind of stones.

"Just you give them back to me!" exclaimed Hawkins furiously. "They're mine, you thief."

"This stuff, according to the description I have," the detective replied, "is part of the booty stolen from Miss Betsy Trotwood, and the police suspicion that you were the thief was not wrong after all. Hawkins, I've got you with the goods."

The man was evidently in a very desperate mood, for a sullen look crossed his dark face, his black eyes seemed to fairly emit fire, and he jumped at Tom, exclaiming:

"I'll have that jewelry back."

But he was confronted by Tom's revolver.

The detective had it out and leveled in a flash.

"Stand where you are, my boy," said he, coolly.

Hawkins sunk back, muttering an imprecation and growled.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Arrest you to answer to the charge of robbery. You can also give an account of your uncle's death, perhaps."

"I don't know anything about it any more than you do. But I do know that Maud will never get a cent of his money. I'll show you something startling soon."

"Come over here. I've got a pair of bracelets for you."

The detective had his back turned to the hall-door as he made this remark and did not see the figure of a man steal in behind him.

The newcomer wore a full black beard, and was crouching over and gliding toward the detective. He reached the lamp and extinguished it.

A cry of startled surprise burst from the detective's lips as the room became enshrouded in darkness so suddenly, and he involuntarily started toward Hawkins. But he heard the rush of footsteps going toward the door, and then something struck him on the back of the head, making him see myriads of imaginary stars. His senses fled, and uttering a groan, he sank to the floor.

"Hawkins! Come! Blue Peter, I've fixed him!" muttered the newcomer, as he ran over to the bewildered man's side, caught him by the arm and dragged him toward the door.

"Who in thunder are you?" demanded Hawkins.

"What! Blue Peter! Don't you know me? I am Edward Harvey."

"But that black beard?"

"Is false. Hurry away! Do you want to go to jail? I've got a flivver downstairs. Heard all that passed from the time Maud entered. Come on!"

They ran out of the room, down the stairs, and out of the house, entered a Ford at the gate, drove away as fast as the machine could go along the river road toward New York, and Hawkins gradually recovered his wits.

"How in thunder did you happen to arrive at the house?" he asked. "What brought you there?"

"Blue Peter! How forgetful of you! Don't you know I met Maud at the village to-night? I was on my way to your uncle, to speak to him about marrying the girl."

"You was, eh? Then you know how he disliked you—how he hated you—see the point?"

"Yes. I overheard all. Blue Peter! how he hated me. But never mind. He's gone now. He won't bother me. Good riddance. The girl—your cousin—is my good thing now."

"Oh, but she won't marry you after the oath she took to my uncle; if she did, she'd forfeit her right to his money—see the point?"

The doctor laughed softly, and replied:

"You leave that to me. I'll manage."

"I wish to gracious you would marry the girl."

"Why are you so fervent?"

"Why, then she'd lose the money and I'd get it—see the point?"

"Ah! it is kind of you, to be sure. Never mind. Let's talk of something else. You must skip—you must get out of the country. The diamonds the detective found on you are proof enough to send you to jail. Besides, no love was lost between you and your uncle. He died at your hands. His death was mysterious. Blue Peter! can't you see what a hole you are in? You might go to the chair. For instance, you were caught trying to poison him. Now, suppose it is found by analysis that he succumbed to a drug—that he has been systematically poisoned for the last two weeks—that the drug is of the same nature as that which you tried to give him!"

"But you gave me that poison vial."

"Did I? What of it? My words were mere suppositions. But things might turn out that way, you know. If they did, the jury would be harsh. They would say you killed old Ruddyglow. They would say that you tampered with his medicine—doctored it, and tried to kill him out of revenge for the way he cut you out of his fortune. Just think what a slice of information against you the detective could give He could say you tried to coerce the old man by threatening—nay, attempting to poison him if he did not alter his will in your favor. Blackmail—rank blackmail, Hawkins. In short, there is a mountain of damaging evidence accruing against you, and if you do not make tracks in good season Heaven only knows how short the time may be when you will find yourself lodged in prison a condemned felon."

The arguments Harvey advanced were so strong that a cold sweat broke out over Hawkins, and he pondered deeply.

"You are right," he said presently. "I am afraid things look pretty black for me. I'll skip. But it's queer you advance the poison theory. You wouldn't do it for nothing. Oh, no—and if he did die of poison, you, perhaps, know how he got it."

Harvey laughed in dulcet tones.

"Pooh! Pooh!" said he, snapping his fingers. "How could I—why should I poison him? I would gain nothing by it. Blue Peter, man, are you crazy? I mention the fact because I know that his malady puzzled his attending doctor."

"But you seem anxious to get me out of New York."

"Do I? Well, it is for your own sake. I have a slinking regard for you! I—pooh!" there he puffed for wind. "I have a great friendly feeling, as it were—that is all."

"And if I don't go?"

"Stay, by all means, then. I am indifferent."

But Hawkins had no intention of staying, for the climate of that section of the country seemed to be getting too hot for him. So he insinuated that it would not be a bad idea to drive to the Grand Central station and drop a few leagues between himself and the metropolis for mere safety's safe, whereat Harvey smilingly assented, and they rode on.

Within an hour James Hawkins was being whirled out of the State of New York on an express train, leaving behind a singularly darkened character, and many people sighing to have him arraigned at the bar of justice to answer for many crimes he had committeed.

The physician then discarded his disguise and drove home, very much contented with himself and the world in general, for everything was transpiring as he wished it to.

Tom Wonder regained his senses a short time after Jim Hawkins made his escape, arose to his feet, lit the lamp, bathed his hands with cold water on a towel, and then took possession of the two glasses of medicine.

"It is my impression," he muttered, "that Hawkins had an accomplice to help him just now, and I am firmly convinced that if I pursue him I won't catch him. Ah! some one is coming!"

It was Maud, who entered the next instant.

She was startled to see a strange man in the room, uttered a cry of affright, and would have retreated in dismay had not Tom called out:

"Wait, Miss Post. I am an officer of the law."

"What! You—an—officer—here?" she gasped, pausing.

"Exactly so! There has been foul play."

"Oh! that noise which alarmed me so just now——"

"It was made by Jim Hawkins."

"He—here—in this house?"

"He was, but he is gone now. He ran away from me."

"And Uncle John——"

"Hawkins tried to force your uncle to cancel his will and make one over to himself, but I thwarted him."

"Uncle John!" the girl exclaimed.

"Hush! He will never speak again, miss."

"What!" she screamed. "Dead?"

"He is dead!" replied Tom.

A cry of dismay burst from the girl's lips, and she rushed over to the bedside, bent over the stiffened body, peered down at the horror-distorted face, and then reeled back.

"Gone! He is gone!" she cried, frantically.

"A victim, I fear, of foul play," added Tom.

The outburst of grief the girl vented was checked at these words.

She dried her eyes on her handkerchief, strode up to the detective, and with a face as pale as that of the corpse she cried:

"How do you know that?"

"Investigation will very likely prove it," replied Tom. "At any rate, I am going to carry this medicine away to have its ingredients analyzed. I will also take his will for safekeeping. Now listen, and I'll tell you what happened in here a few moments ago."

The girl sank into a chair, keenly alive to everything as she choked back her grief, and Tom gave her an explanation.

"Dreadful! Dreadful!" she exclaimed, when he had ended his recital. "I can hardly realize that Jim is so bad."

"Did he ever threaten your uncle?"

"Never, although they quarrelled bitterly."

"Did you or any of the servants admit any one just now?"

"No. The two servants retired half an hour ago, and

I went to my room after my conversation with my poor uncle."

"Then the lower part of the house is locked up for the night?"

"Yes. It is the duty of the servants to do so."

"Will you accompany me on a tour of inspection?"

"Certainly. If there has been any crime committed here I want the criminal punished."

The detective produced a flashlight and they left the room. When they got downstairs it was found that the front door had evidently not been locked, for it stood ajar.

"This is the way Hawkins got in," said Tom, "and if he had an accomplice the man entered by the same means."

The detective then made a thorough examination of the premises, questioned the servants closely, and sent a note to the physician who had been attending the dead man. In compliance with the note the doctor came at once, and brought an apparatus with him to analyze the medicine. He was amazed to hear that his patient was dead, and more so to learn all that Tom had discovered. His examination of the body ended all doubts, for when the medicine was analyzed he found that it contained a large percentage of neurotic poison, which proved to be a mixture of chloral hydrate and aconite.

The contents of the bottle which Tom had taken from Jim Hawkins was composed of the same mixture.

It was inferred, as a consequence, that John Ruddyglow died from the effect of these poisons. Thirty grains of the chloral will kill a man, the symptons being delirium, followed by profound unconsciousness, stertorous breathing gradually becoming more and more feeble, lividity and pulselessness.

The aconite was far deadlier, one-fiftieth part of a grain causing death, and the symptons being numbness, heat, tingling in the mouth and throat, abolition of muscular power, dilated eyes, cold skin, total consciousness and breath oppressed. The sufferer may know what is going on, dreads death, is numb and partly paralyzed till death suddenly occurs after two or three hurried gasps; the death is due to shock or sudden collapse, or from asphyxia from paralysis of the respiratory organs.

When the physician heard how the patient died, and compared it with the result of the analyses he comprehended at once that Hawkins was not guilty of murder unless it could be proven that he administered the poison in the medicine. It was evident that some one had put the drug in the medicine, for none was prescribed by the physician.

The body was locked up, and the detective and doctor went away to report the case. On the following day the coroner rendered a verdict in accordance with the facts, as traces of the drug were revealed when a cadaveric autopsy was made and the witnesses were examined. No evidence could be adduced to prove whether it was a criminal or a suicidal deed, and the only thing was to discharge the witnesses and lay suspicion upon Jim Hawkins. A warrant was issued for his arrest upon suspicion of his guilt, but as he had fled for parts unknown it was not possible just then to find and examine him.

The warrant was placed in Wonder's hands for execution, and the detective gave Ruddyglow's will to the surrogate, endeavored to find out where the vial of poison came from which he recovered from Hawkins, and failed.

An examination of Dr. Harvey was fruitless, and the two servants could throw no light on the mystery. In short, the detective reduced the case down to one point. He must find Hawkins. Unless he did so he feared that the mystery could never be solved, and the ends of justice would be cheated.

CHAPTER ONE

SAVED FROM THE RIVER

A WILD cry for help pealed out with startling distinctness upon the North river—a cry fraught with intense anguish. It was in the tones of a woman, and caused every one who heard it to shudder and hurry on with the conviction that some poor wretch had cast herself into the icy water to end her unhappy existence.

The cry came from a long, covered dock, in the middle section of New York City, and the appealing tones were in the strong, healthful voice of a young person.

"Help! Help!" came the startling cry again, this time more piercing and anguished, and showing that the one who uttered it was in sore distress. The night was black, no moon or stars to be seen in the great vault above, and the dull glow of the bulkhead lanterns along the shore seemed to stand out in vivid relief against the surrounding pall. Tom Wonder had been hurrying along West street when that appealing cry first rang out so sharply, and it brought him to a sudden pause.

He stood listening intently a moment and then the cry was repeated, when he imagined it came from the pier directly opposite where he stood. To dash across the street was but the work of an instant, and he ran out on the covered dock.

"A woman in distress," he muttered.

He was wonderfully fleetfooted, and might have reached the end of the pier in a short space of time had not the flooring been in a sadly dilapidated condition, causing him to slip and stumble in the gloom, and plant his feet through holes in the planks.

Ahead he saw an arched doorway at the end of the pier, the opening showing plainly, as there was a bulkhead lantern fastened up on a spile out on the end of the dock.

But framed in that opening of light he saw a scene which only those piercing cries could warrant. A man and a woman were struggling in the opening close to the string-piece, the man evidently making every effort to hurl the woman into the river. It made the detective's blood fairly boil with anger.

"A murder!" he muttered, as he leaped ahead faster; "but I'll put a climax to that tragedy."

As he drew nearer the struggling pair he heard the girl cry:

"You shall not kill me! Oh, this is terrible—terrible!"

"Hush!" hissed the man, furiously.

They toppled over the string-piece as the last word was uttered, and a frantic shriek burst from the lips of the woman that rent the air like a knife. On dashed the detective, his mind in a fever over the dreadful scene.

He reached the end of the dock and peered down at the water, wondering what the fearful scene implied, when the water parted a few yards from him, and he saw the woman's head appear on the surface, her hair disheveled and her hands cast up. The light from the pier lantern was shed out on the surging tide, and her white face, half turned aside, was defined sharply against the dark background.

"Who can she be?" the detective muttered.

It was very evident that the woman could not swim, and as the tide was setting in strongly at that point, Tom saw that it would sweep her along. Once she was carried beyond the faint glow of light shed down on the water by the bulkhead lantern, he knew that it would be a hard matter to find her. Moreover, as he looked down he was startled to see the dim outlines of the man's dark head come up behind her, beheld a hand thrust forward and

grasp her, saw the fellow swimming expertly, and then the hand pushed the woman beneath the surface.

"He is trying to drown her!" the detective muttered angrily.

Such intent was evidently in the man's mind, for the writhing body of the woman sank out of sight. A thrill of dismay passed over the detective.

He flung off his hat and coat, made a running jump and dove into the water. The man saw him coming. A smothered ejaculation of fear escaped his lips, and as the body of the detective disappeared beneath the river he turned around, rapidly swam away, and vanished in the dense pall that overhung the water. The detective came to the surface and shot a keen glance all around in search of the woman.

For a moment he did not see her, but soon she appeared a short distance away, half thrown over on her back, and her spread fingers clutching blindly at the vacant air in a mute way, to save herself.

Wonder could swim like a fish, and the moment he saw the woman he dove toward her, rapidly cleft the brine, and reached her side just as she was sinking. Out went one of his hands, and he caught her by the collar of her dress, and held her up.

This action brought her head above the surface when she began to gasp stertorously for air, eject water and struggle hard to catch hold of something. Taking care to keep himself out of reach of her arms, the detective swam toward the dock and glanced around in quest of the man. That rascal, though, had made good his escape, and satisfied that he had taken alarm and fled, the officer hastened to get into the slip with his burden.

It was a hard job, for the woman increased her efforts to get hold of him as she momentarily grew more sensible of her position. Yet, he finally managed to reach the spiles of the dock, whereupon the struggle had taken place. They were slippery and not to be climbed.

Tom struck out with one hand toward a vessel that was moored beside a pier, and upon reaching it, he finally succeeded in getting the fast-recovering woman and himself up on the deck. He rested a moment, and seeing no one, he lifted the woman up in his arms and stepped upon the end of the pier with her. There he laid her down, for she was rapidly recovering, and after he had wrung some of the water out of his clothing and put on his coat, he walked over to her side and knelt down.

She had evacuated considerable water through both mouth and nose, and her gasping for breath subsided gradually until it once more became normal.

"She is all right now," the detective muttered, as he leaned over her. "But who can she be?"

Her back was turned toward him and he gently turned her around so that the light from the pier lantern could play upon her pallid face. A sigh escaped her lips as he did so.

The detective uttered an ejaculation and eagerly bent nearer, staring hard at the face as the glow of the lantern fell fully upon her. Then he sprang to his feet excitedly.

He saw that she was Maud Post!

CHAPTER TWO

TWO NEW CHARACTERS

The detective was amazed at what he discovered, and when the girl recovered her senses and sat up he knelt beside her and saw that she was weeping.

"Miss Post!" he exclaimed, "in Heaven's name, what does this mean? Who was the fellow who was just making such a desperate effort to kill you?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, arising to her feet in the most intense agitation, "Mr. Wonder—you here——"

"I witnessed all that happened, Miss Post."

"Then it was you who saved me from him?"

"Had I not heard your cries for help, the chap with whom you were struggling might have succeeded in putting a period to your life."

"Oh, I am so grateful to you, sir."

"Gratitude, eh? Then confess who he was."

"Strange as it may seem, I dare not expose him."

"How very odd! Remember, he tried desperately hard to kill you just now, and may do it again when I am not near to aid you, when, perhaps, he may be more successful. Speak—uphold the ends of justice."

"Do not question me," pleaded the girl. "I must remain firm in my resolve not to speak. Oh, you do not understand the importance of silence on my part—you cannot realize how much is at stake."

"Humph! I shall not bother you any more on that score then for the present. Keep silence if you like. But I can assure you of one thing, that it is my firm conviction it was Hawkins. He fled, but has returned, and I will yet catch him. I see through this dirty piece of work. He wanted to cheat you out of the fortune your dead uncle left, and was jealous because you got it. Now he has made an appointment to meet you here to-night, and tried to do away with you. For, if you die, as he is your only heir he would succeed to the fortune your uncle left."

The girl was silent. Tom saw that she would give him no satisfaction.

"We are convinced at the detective bureau that Hawkins was the one who killed Mr. Ruddyglow," said the detective after a pause. "For the coroner found that your uncle died from the effects of the same kind of poison I found in the bottle the man tried to empty down the dying man's throat on the night he passed away, because he would not revoke his will, and make over his possessions to Hawkins by a codicil. I know all about Hawkins' little game, my girl, and saw and overheard all that passed between them, for I was in the room at the time. So you see, we've got a clean case against your cousin."

The detective touched a responsive chord in Maud's heart.

"If I were sure Jim did that crime," said she, breaking the determined stillness she had been maintaining, "I would do my utmost to have him convicted. But, Mr. Wonder, nothing absolute could be proven, and you know it. All the proof against Tom was purely circumstantial. My uncle was under the influence of that drug for two weeks at least. During that period Tom was in the house unbeknown to my uncle, it is true, but no one saw him put any of the poison in his medicine."

"But can't you see how suspicious the whole case looks?" demanded the detective, with asperity. "Your uncle did not have an enemy in the world but his outcast nephew. Hawkins was the only person who could have hoped to gain anything by the death of the old gentleman. Consequently he is the one we must suspect."

"Be lenient," said the girl earnestly. "Do not do anything rash in the matter, sir. Indeed, it would be very cruel of you to arrest and convict him without the most positive proof that he is the guilty party."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Post; I am blunt and outspoken, but if I ever lay my hands on Jim Hawkins I

guarantee you that it won't take half an hour in this city for me to shove him in jail."

"I suppose it is your duty, sir," the girl replied, sadly.

"You are right. And I shall do it at any cost. Now, if you won't give the chap away who did this dirty piece of work to you, let me escort you home so that I will be assured that no harm will befall you again to-night. I have been deputed to sift through the masked mystery of your uncle's death, and I will find the culprit yet if I have good fortune and keep wide awake."

"I will gladly avail myself of your protection, sir. Come, I am a little weak yet from the nervous shock, but I can manage to walk now, and we will soon reach Betsy Trotwood's house, where I am boarding for the present.

"Betsy Trotwood? Why, that was just where I was bound for when your cries attracted me over here."

"Indeed? And do you know that dear, good soul? She was once my nurse, and has been a good friend to me all my life. She inherited a large fortune a few years after I was born, and lives here alone——"

"Oh, yes, I know all about her. She was a victim of that delectable cousin of yours something like a month ago, and I managed to recover the diamonds he stole from her on the night your uncle died. She was notified, and I've got them in my pocket now, to bring them to her again. So, you see, our paths lie in the same direction. I am glad you have taken up your abode with her, for she is a very respectable old maid, and one who will guard you well, I have not the remotest doubt."

"What!" she cried, starting and turning pale. "Was Jim the thief who stole her jewelry? It cannot be possible!"

"I told you he was a full-fledged scoundrel," said Tom, shrugging his shoulders. "You have yet to learn much of the atrocities laid to his door. But come on, we will both get chilled if we remain here much longer. Take my arm. I will hire a taxi-cab to carry us uptown."

The girl silently complied, and they walked away.

A machine was found presently, and they entered it and were driven uptown to Greenwich avenue, where the taxi came to a pause in front of a modest-looking brick house.

The detective left the girl to go in, and proceeding to a store not far distant, he procured a suit of clothing in exchange for his own wet garments, and arrayed himself in dry underwear.

Then he returned to Betsy Trotwood's house, ascended the stoop, rang the bell, and a fat woman opened the door.

She was a buxom person of forty, attired in a gray dress, and had a round, chubby, good-natured red face and light hair.

"Well, well, well!" she cried, panting for breath. "If it ain't Mr. Wonder! Bless my soul! Come in—come in, sir. Now, I declare! I'm real glad to see you. Huh!"—here she gave an extra gasp for wind—"Maud said you fished her out of the river. Poor little dearie. Fell in quite accidentally, didn't she? I'm so sorry."

The detective nodded, and was about to tell her that he had come to return her stolen diamonds, when somebody whizzed past him, shoving him aside, and when he recovered from his astonishment and glanced up, he beheld a tall, thin, old man, with a rusty high hat, a choker collar and a shabby suit of black, the coat-tails whereof nearly touched his heels.

This individual had a thin, cadaverous, puckered-up face, a long, sharp nose, beetling eyebrows, and little twinkling eyes.

He wore an unpleasant scowl upon his face, too, stood menacing Tom with an umbrella, as if about to stab him with it, intervening his body between the fat woman and the detective, and while pushing Miss Trotwood back, he cried in shrill tones of anger:

"Goldurn it, I'm jealous o' yew, I be, and though I daon't knaow who yew air, or what yew air, I'll gi' yew tew understand, goldurned smart, as Betsy Trotwood air my gal. My name is Christopher Crab—what's yourn?"

CHAPTER THREE

A SECRET UNEXPECTEDLY EXPOSED

THE excitatble old individual confronting the detective ended his last explanation by violently blowing his nose, flourishing his umbrella and stamping on the floor.

For an instant Tom was so much amazed he could hardly find utterance; then the truth dawned upon his bewildered mind, a smile stole over his face, and he said:

"Excuse me, sir, but this language—these actions are most violent—most unwarrantable—most mystifying."

"But goldurn it!" fumed the old fellow, "I daon't see it, d'yew mind. Naow take an old fewl's advice, youngster, an' clear aout o' here, or I'll r'ar up an' kick ther daylight clean aout o' yew!"

"Christopher," puffed Betsy as she caught the old fellow by the coat-tails and dragged him back into the hall, skating his big feet over the carpet, "be calm, you old darling, or I'll break every bone in your body!"

"But, Betsy, I've had my eye on this 'ere guy a laong taime naow a-callin' at this 'ere haouse, an' I hev abaout come ter ther conclewsion that he's a-tryin' tew cut me aout o' yeour affections."

He sniffed, blew his nose again with a report like a gun, and wiped his aged eyes as if he were dolefully weeping.

"So he is your lover, eh?" laughed Tom, entering the hall and closing the door. "I see. But it's all a great mistake, old chap. I'm here on business—that is all."

"Business?" echoed Christopher Crab, incredulously.

"Yes. I am the detective who recovered the lady's diamonds."

"Well—I—swan! Haow I've been deceived!"

"I am not laying siege to Miss Trotwood's heart."

Mr. Crab uttered a sigh of profound relief, blew his trumpeting nose again, looked very solemn, and said:

"Thanks be tew glory. Quite sure o' that, be yew?"

"Decidedly so. And now, Miss Trotwood—see here."

He drew the jewelry from his pocket, and handed it to her. Betsy Trotwood gave a scream, grasped the box, and cried:

"Oh! I've got the dear, blessed things back again!"

"They are all intact, and now that I have restored your property, I wish to ask you to look out for Miss Post, and I will take my departure from here."

"May the Lord bless you," said the old maid.

Then she turned around to her ancient lover, and gave him a slap that sent him reeling back.

"Daon't, Betsy, daon't," he exclaimed, entreatingly.

"That's for your blamed jealousy now," said she.

"Oh! If my poor dead darter Arabella could see yew a-treatin' me this way, she'd turn in her grave."

"Oh, that's jest like you," scornfully said Miss Trotwood. "Always a-bringing up her name lately, an' comparing her with me."

"But consider—she hev only been dead a fortnight."

"Certainly, your rememberance of her's green yet, but

she couldn't have been no great shakes, or she'd have kept the husband she wedded. But no—it was, according to your own story, a runaway match, and the doctor soon got tired of his bargain, and beat it away from the city, leaving you to take care of her until she died. Bah! Don't you tell me nothing!"

"Well, 'twasn't no fault o' mine if Doctor Harvey desarted my poor gal, was it?"

"No—can't say it was!"

The detective pricked up his ears upon hearing this.

"Hello!" he ejaculated. "I say, Mr. Crab, do you mean to say that Edward Harvey, the physician, was your daughter's husband, and that he deserted her?"

"I reckon he was," replied the old man. "Dew yew knaow anything abaout that 'ere scaoundrel?"

"I have met the man."

"Dew tell!" was the excited reply. "Whereabouts?"

"He has been practicing at Fernville for a long time."

"What! An' be he there yet?"

"I believe he is!"

"Thanks be tew glory, I've faound him aout."

"I should imagine he ill-treated your daughter?"

"Dreadful!" replied the old fellow. "I'll tell yew about it, so's tew shaow him up. He was a law student quite nigh tew where I was a-livin', an' sneaked off an' married my darter Arabella. They kept it a secret for a laong toime, when my poor gal had tew confess the truth to me, an' we went tew the church, an' she showed me ther record o' ther weddin' tew satisfy my mind. But when we got back tew home, we never seen nothin' o' Doctor Harvey again. He'd tired o' his bargain, an' lef' fer parts unknaown. We hunted for him, but 'twasn't no use. Then my gal took sick, an' a fortnight ago she died. I swore I would lambaste ther livin' stuffin's aout o' my son-in-law for the mean way in which he treated poor Arabella, ther fust time I caught hold of him, an' I've been a-keepin' my weather eye peeled ever since tew dew it. He ain't be'n faound ever since he disappeared, though, but I'm a-livin' on in haopes!"

"Well," said the detective, "I will tell you the sequel to his rascality, and you can then judge the extent of his cruelty and meanness. He became acquainted with a charming young lady, whose name for good reasons I must withhold, and won her affection while your daughter was yet alive, and probably lying suffering upon her deathbed. He wanted to marry her, with the probable intention of gaining control of an immense fortune she expected to inherit. But the girl's relative took a violent dislike to the man, and forbade her receiving his attentions. The girl swore that she would not hold any further intercourse with him. Indeed, the stipulation of her inheriting that fortune was that if she married Dr. Harvey she would forfeit her right to the money and become a beggar. So you see there was sufficient barrier to the girl's fond hope of marrying the man."

"Yes, yes," said the old man, violently blowing his nose.

"The result was that the girl never again saw the rascal as far as I could discover."

"Thank heaven!" breathed the old man.

"And he yet remains, I think, at Fernville, very much disappointed in his hopes, while the young lady has come to New York to live."

"An' goldurn my buttons if I don't go up there an' gi' him what I swaore I'd dew!"

"It would serve him right to receive punishment for the heartless manner in which he treated your unfortunate daughter," replied the detective.

"That is just exactly what I think, too," warmly added Miss Trotwood, and then she added in a sudden burst of magnanimity, "and if you give the rascal a right good thrashing, Christopher, I don't know but what I might consider your proposal in earnest and say 'yes'."

"Betsy!" gasped the old fellow delightedly, opening his arms.

"Christopher!" cried the old lady, opening her arms.

And they rushed into each other's embrace.

Tom silently left the house, for his work was done.

"Could Jim Hawkins have been the wretch to make such a desperate attempt on Maud's life?" he muttered as he hurried along. "It does not seem possible, yet it is more than probable, for if she was out of the way he would stand a mighty good chance of inheriting the money. Yet, bad as Hawkins is, I never knew of him killing any one, and do not believe he really would have poisoned his uncle, if I had not interfered, the night Ruddyglow died."

The detective, though, was thoroughly convinced that the girl's assailant was her outlawed cousin. He turned the corner of Greenwich avenue into Christopher street, and went so swiftly that he collided violently with a man who was coming from the opposite direction. Both uttered startled exclamations.

"Excuse me, sir," said the detective, apologetically.

"Blue Peter! You have winded me!" gasped the other.

"Why, it is Doctor Harvey!"

"Bless me—no—is it—can it be—why, yes—Mr. Wonder! Glad to see you, sir—glad to meet you."

And Harvey held out his hand.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DOCTOR'S DOINGS

THE man confronting Tom Wonder was rather an odd-looking person, and more peculiar in his character. His age must have been forty. He was tall, slender, and very light complexioned, his body being clad in a suit of black clothing, the coat buttoned up to the neck and only showing a round collar, which lent him rather a priestly appearance. His face was narrow, and very white, not a vistage of color showing in his cadaverous cheeks; his eyes were of a pale blue and had rather a languid look; there was no hair on his face, his nose was very sharp, and his eyebrows, eye-lashes and close-cut hair were pure white. All his actions were quick and nervous, and he had a habit of shrugging his shoulders and letting his eyes rove with a fidgety, restless expression.

In a word, there was nothing attractive in his appearance excepting for the singularity of his looks, and yet he was possessed of a strange magnetic power, for he was a hypnotist, and consequently a strong-willed man.

"It must rather have been the powerful mesmeric influence of his mind subtly working upon that of Maud's that forced her to like him," the detective thought, "rather than the pure, unaffected passion which nature would assert in one person for another."

He did not take Dr. Harvey's proffered hand, and a shade of annoyance crossed the physician's face as he noted it from beneath his silk hat.

"You are unfriendly," he observed.

"And with just cause, sir!" sternly replied Tom.

"I do not understand you, Mr. Wonder."

"Well, I just heard a little of your past history."

"My history—what about it?"

"You are a scoundrel, Dr. Harvey. You married Arabella Crab——"

"Blue Peter! How did you——"

"Then you deserted her."

"I protest——"

"And finally, while married, you tried to wed Maud Post."

Dr. Harvey laughed disagreeably, showing a fine set of teeth, shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

"Really, sir, if I were a fighting man I would hit you."

"I sincerely regret you are not. It would do me good to thrash you in retaliation."

"My escape is wonderful, sir."

"Luckily, though, your plan was defeated, and the girl did not fall a victim to your rascally wiles."

"She might have lost her interest in her uncle's estate if she had been foolish enough to marry me."

"The father of your unfortunate wife will avenge himself upon you before long."

"Oh, 'pon my word, that is rich—the old fellow is on my track, eh? Well, I like that! Bless his heart, I will treat him like a gentleman when we meet."

The detective was disgusted with the cool effrontery of the man, and shaking his finger at him, he exclaimed:

"I know you are a crook, and I will keep my eye on you in future, Harvey!"

"Blue Peter! But that's agreeable! You detective fellows have an advantage of us poor citizens. You club us, make false charges and imprison us when it suits your fancy to do so, while we have to meekly submit and suffer."

"Come! That will do from you. Trot along now!"

The doctor bowed sneeringly and passed along the street, and the detective glided into a doorway out of sight.

"I'll watch that man!" he muttered, as a sudden impulse seized him. "He was very thick with Hawkins, and through him I may find out where Maud's cousin is hiding himself so adroitly. If Hawkins is the murderer of his uncle I must have him arraigned for it."

The doctor went past Betsy Trotwood's house, then paused, and as Tom peered around the corner he saw the light-complexioned man glance up and down the street to see if any one was observing his actions, then glide over to the windows of the front parlor and peer in.

"He probably knows that Maud is stopping there," the detective cogitated, "and may meet old Christopher Crab unexpectedly, if he remains there long enough. Then—well, I'll bet he will get a good drubbing for his meanness!"

Harvey remained spying into the parlor for some time, and occasionally turned his ear to the window, as if in the act of listening to what was said inside the house. After a while his curiosity seemed to be sated, for he walked away, and the detective glided around the corner and followed him at a safe distance. Going straight to West Fourteenth street, Harvey turned toward Ninth avenue and went up the elevated railroad steps, the detective following close behind.

It then occurred to the officer that he might be going home, and as the man passed into a forward car of a train that came along Tom entered the one behind it, where he had a view of the doctor through a window.

As the detective conjectured, the man did go up to Fernville, and upon reaching the village he went along the main street until he arrived at his own residence. It was a small cottage, surrounded by a large yard full of fruit trees and bushes, and it was kept by an old negress whom the physician employed. There was a light burning in the back parlor, which Harvey used as an office, and in answer to his ring at the bell, the door was opened by the old black woman.

He passed inside, the door closed, and the detective got over the fence into the yard, lurked in the densest shadows to avoid observation, and crept along the path at the side of the house until he reached the back parlor window. He paused, softly opened the blinds, peered in, as the shade was partly raised, and saw the physician enter the room.

The apartment was plainly furnished, contained a desk, book-case and a small medicine rack, and was illuminated by a lamp that stood upon the table. Laying aside his hat, the physician sat down at his desk with an ugly look upon his peculiar white face. It was evident to the detective, who could plainly see his features, that his thoughts were of the most angry kind. The detective had not been there long watching him, when he was suddenly startled by hearing a rustling sound in the bushes a few yards off.

He started, and glanced around hastily. The dim outlines of a man were discerned coming toward him from the front of the house.

"Who can this fellow be?" he muttered.

Not wishing to be seen, he suddenly dropped down upon his hands and knees, and crept silently away to a nearby bush, behind which he concealed himself.

He could see the man from this retreat without being seen himself, and observed that he came directly toward the window, paused in front of it, and peered in. The man wore a slouched hat and a coat, the collar of which was turned up about his throat. Try as hard as he might, the detective could not gain a fair view of the other's face, for the man so kept his head averted that it was impossible. He remained peering in at the window a few moments and then opened the shutters, softly lifted up the sash and climbed in through the window.

Dr. Harvey heard him entering. He uttered a startled cry and bounded to his feet. Up jumped Tom, and over to the window he hurried. The newcomer had left it open, and the cold night wind was fluttering the green shade. For one instant Harvey and the intruder stood silently contemplating each other. Then the stranger advanced into the room.

"Harvey, old feller, how are you? Back again, my boy, to have a talk with you—see the point?" he cried.

"By the Blue Peter! it is Jim Hawkins!" the physician exclaimed in startled tones.

"Bet your life. Impossible to get rid of me."

"By heavens, you are the last person I wanted to see."

And the physician's voice betrayed how earnest he was.

"I thought I'd stumble across him if I shadowed the doctor, and I didn't get left," the detective muttered.

CHAPTER FIVE

TWO CROOKS IN COUNCIL

WITH his accustomed cool audacity, Hawkins drew a chair over near the desk, sat down, and taking a cigar and a match from his pocket, he said:

"Sit down, Harvey, sit down!"

The doctor complied with an ill grace, and said, as he darted a furtive, suspicious glance at the other:

"What do you want here?"

"I've called on special business—see the point?"

"And I thought you were safely hiding yourself up in New York State all this time?"

"So I was, part of the month I was away."

"You are suspected of your uncle's murder."

Hawkins started, turned as pale as death, fidgeted about in his chair, glared at his companion, and then said:

"I didn't kill my uncle!"

"There is no chance to suspect any one but you."

"Why am I suspected?"

"Because you are the only one who could have been benefited by his death outside of Maud Post."

"True; but as Maud got the dough, why wasn't she suspected?"

"Do you suspect Maud of the deed?"

"No—yet she had a much better chance to kill John Ruddyglow than I did. Wasn't she in the house with him all the time? In a moment when no one was looking she could have given the old feller that poison in his medicine. But her pretty face prevents the detectives suspecting her. Some of the foulest crimes in the world are done by pretty women. Why, she wasn't even suspected!"

"No. I don't believe she was."

"Had I any prospects?"

"None, since you were disinherited."

"Then why should I do the job?"

"Well, I've warned you that you are the only one whom the police suspect, and a warrant is issued for your arrest. Keep shady or you will get in trouble."

"I notice that you was awfully anxious about me."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, you wanted to hurry me out of New York."

"You would be better off many miles away from here."

"Harvey, I'm going to stay."

"I am not going to lay myself open to suspicion by harboring you in my house."

"Well, I'll bet you will!"

"Blue Peter!—am I a child to be ordered in this way?"

"Not quite—but I've got you right here," said Jim as he stuck out his thumb, and bore down with it.

Harvey's face flushed with anger.

"What do you mean by that?" he growled.

Hawkins laughed disagreeably.

"Just this," he replied. "While I have been away from this section of the country, I stumbled across a man who told me a secret of yours—see the point? It is one of those things a feller only discovers by accident, for you paid a good sum of money to cover up your tracks, my boy, but failed to do it."

"A secret of mine?" stammered the doctor.

"Yes, and a weighty one, too."

"What was it?"

"Let me whisper—come here!"

The doctor leaned over toward Hawkins, and the fugitive said but three words to him. The hidden detective failed to overhear what was said, much to his disgust.

But the effect on Harvey now was magical.

A cry of fear burst involuntarily from his lips, and he bounded to his feet as if galvanized. A look of horror indescribable swept over his features, he raised his spread fingers, staggered back and fell to the floor, trembling from head to foot.

"Pitiful heaven, Jim, say no more!" he groaned.

"Then you acknowledge what I say to be true?"

"I cannot deny it."

"I'll make good use of you now," cried Hawkins, with a grin on his dark face. "Don't be a clam. Get up, you driveler! I'm the boss now—see the point?"

"When did you arrive in New York?"

"Only an hour ago, and I came directly here."

"Have you seen Maud yet?"

"No. I am going over to the manor now."

"But she lives in New York—the manor is vacant."

"Does she? Is it? I didn't know that."

"Strange," the hidden detective thought. "I was sure that the fellow who tried to drown Maud was Jim Hawkins. But here I learn that he has not been in New York much more than an hour, and the attempt on the girl's life occurred fully three or four hours ago. What can this mean? Who was her assailant? This masked mystery is becoming very puzzling."

And as Tom said this he climbed upon the window-sill and stepped lightly into the back parlor from behind the shade, his entrance causing both men to look up.

CHAPTER SIX

LOCKED IN THE WINE VAULTS

THE two men, interrupted in the midst of their talk, arose to their feet, and glanced at Tom Wonder in blank amazement. The entrance of the detective was so unlooked for that they for an instant could hardly believe their eyesight. It was not until Tom stepped toward them that Hawkins sufficiently recovered his presence of mind to speak.

"The detective," he muttered.

Dr. Harvey was very much abashed.

"By the Blue Peter!" said he. "You have followed me here from the city, I perceive, Mr. Detective."

"I have, indeed," replied Tom, "and I am fortunate enough to find that you two are yet as great friends as ever. In fact, that a very close intimacy exists between you, and that a mighty secret, Harvey, has put you completely in this man's power."

The physician started guiltily.

"You did not hear?" he commenced to stammer.

"No," interrupted Tom. "I did not hear what it was, I am sorry to say, but I hope ere long to know what it was."

"That you never will!"

"But perhaps our mutual friend Hawkins will tell me."

"You won't get anything out of me," growled Jim.

Tom pulled out his hand-cuffs.

"These," said he, "were designed for you on the night your uncle perished. But you was smart enough to get away before I had a chance to get them on you. Perhaps this time I may be more successful."

"Don't be a clam!" growled Hawkins. "Do you imagine I'm going to let you put those things on me?"

"Why certainly."

Tom drew his revolver and pointed it at Hawkins' head.

"Don't fire!" he exclaimed.

The man uttered a smothered cry and retreated.

"But I shall, unless you do as I say."

The physician turned out the light and the room was enshrouded in darkness, and Hawkins made a rush for the window, bumped into the detective, and they grasped each other and fell over the ledge.

A struggle at once ensued between them.

In the darkness the physician picked up a chair, and stealing over to the combatants, he awaited his opportunity and dealt Tom a blow that knocked the detective spinning through the window into the yard, senseless.

Hawkins followed him.

"Did I kill him?" asked the physician, looking out the window. "I almost broke the chair on his head."

"No—he is senseless, though," replied Hawkins, bending over the detective and feeling the throbbing of his heart.

"I'm glad of that—very glad. I don't want to get hauled up on any serious charge."

"What will we do with this fellow?" asked Hawkins.

"We had best strike an effective blow to secure our safety. By the Blue Peter, I'm afraid of him."

"And to tell the truth, I'm a little that way myself. What plan have you got in view?"

"We can take him to the deserted manor and lock him up in the wine vaults. He will be safe enough there until you and I find it to our convenience to let him go free. If he is allowed to roam about at will, interfering with our plans, and threatening to put us both in jail, we may come to grief before we know it."

"That's so, old fellow."

"Then tie him up and gag him, so he can't get away or shout for help, and I will get my flivver ready, when we can take him off without any trouble."

The doctor disappeared from the window as he said this, and Hawkins at once bound and gagged the detective with some pieces of rope and a handkerchief. Within a few minutes the doctor came down the drive with his Ford, and they lifted the unconscious officer in and drove off with him toward the Hudson.

"It is very evident," said Harvey as they went along, "that he tracked me from New York, and seeing you enter the house he has very likely been eavesdropping outside of the window, overheard all we said, and knows too much for our good."

"That's so. He's a terror. I'd sooner have the Old Nick himself on my track than this fellow."

"In the vaults under the old manor he will be safe enough, and I will personally take care of him, to preclude the possibility of his escape."

The car reached the manor in due course, and going along the drive to the back of the house, it was stopped, and the men alighted.

"Isn't the house locked up?" asked Hawkins.

"I believe it is. But we can easily get in. I'll open one of the kitchen windows—the latch can be shoved back with the blade of a penknife, and once inside I can open the back door to admit you." Hawkins nodded, and while he was raising the unconscious detective the doctor opened one of the kitchen windows, climbed into the house and disappeared. Then Hawkins lifted the detective, and carrying him to the back door of the kitchen, he found it open, and his accomplice standing on the threshold.

They had no light but some matches which the physician carried, and finding the cellar door, it was opened, and they went down with their prisoner. A damp, moldy odor assailed their nostrils upon entering the cellar, and as they passed through to the front they came to a brick wall, in which a large, heavy planked door was set.

There was a key in the lock, and Harvey flung the door open, revealing by the light of a match a square apartment with four walls of brick, the floor cemented, and the ceiling fully fifteen feet above. They relieved the detective of his gag and his bindings, laid him upon the floor, slammed the door shut; the doctor locked it and took the key, and they ascended the stairs and left the house. Entering the Ford, they drove back to Fernville.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A DOCTOR'S CONFESSION

THE light of another day dawned before Tom Wonder again came to a realization of things mundane.

Then he carefully examined his prison surroundings and arrived at the conclusion he had been made a victim.

The detective had no idea that he was confined in the wine vaults under John Ruddyglow's manor on the Hudson, but set to work to find some means of making his escape from the prison.

"Those two men," thought he, "know that I have them both at my mercy, and have made a prisoner of me in order to shield themselves. I wonder if I could not burrow through these bricks?"

He drew his pen-knife out of his pocket, and going over to the side in which the door was set, he began to pick the mortar out from around one of the bricks. It was slow, tedious work, more especially as he was in utter darkness, and had to feel all he did. But he finally succeeded in dislodging a brick.

Then through the aperture a damp draught came pouring from the cellar, and he attacked the other bricks in the wall. It was much easier to work after the first brick was dislodged, and the detective, after hours of work, managed to make an aperture large enough to admit the passage of his body. To crawl through into the cellar was but the work of an instant, and he groped his way about and found the stairs. Just as he was about to ascend them, though, he heard the door open above him, and some one came down in the darkness.

Tom crept under the staircase.

"I'll watch and listen to see who it is," he muttered.

The newcomer descended the stairs very quietly, and when he reached the bottom, made his way toward the wine cellar, brushing close by the detective. Tom softly crept after him. Then the man lit a match, and saw the hole in the wall. A cry of alarm escaped his lips. It was hardly uttered when Tom's hand clapped him on the shoulder, and the detective exclaimed:

"Dr. Harvey, you are my prisoner!"

"Tom Wonder—escaped!" gasped the other.

The physician let the match fall to the floor, and grasping the detective pressed a cold barrel against Tom's temple. There sounded the click of a hammer spring at the same time, making the detective shiver. But he doubled up his fist and aimed a terrific blow in the direction the sound came from. True to its mark, his fist hit the doctor's arm and the pistol was knocked out of his hand. reached down, got it and pocketed it. A shout of consternation escaped the doctor.

It fell to the floor and Tom, touching it with his foot,

"You must come with me," said Tom decidedly. "If you attempt any treachery, remember that I shall not hesitate to shoot you, and that the law will uphold anything I may do."

"Lead on—I will go."

"No, sir! You will go with me. I will keep hold of your arm. Be careful now."

The detective's left hand slipped down to his prisoner's arm, and he clutched it in a vise-like grip. His right hand held the revolver pressed against the doctor's neck, and in this manner they went over to the stairs and ascended. The doctor did not dare to resist. He feared that his death would ensue if he did.

When they got up in the hall, the light of a window showed Tom that the physician's white face was now fairly ghastly, his white hair, eyebrows and eye-lashes lending him a most strange look. His teeth were chattering, and his blue eyes were bulging out, while his forehead was bedewed with sweat. In a word, he was the picture of intense horror. The grim look upon Tom's face relaxed into a smile as he led the shrinking man out of the house by a back door, and saw where he was.

"You are a nice one to do such a thing as this," he said, "and you see how little it has availed you. Now tell me, where has Hawkins gone?"

"He is at my house," stammered the doctor.

"Tell me who killed John Ruddyglow."

"I cannot—I do not know."

"Well, if you know, and won't confess, I will try my best to show that Hawkins did it——"

"Yes, yes——"

"And hold you as his accomplice."

"Oh, heavens, no. I will tell. I know who killed him!"

"Own up then."

"Jim Hawkins!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

A FEW QUESTIONS

THE detective and his prisoner stood in the automobile drive, and the morning sun was rising in the east amid a clear blue sky. A cold wind was sweeping up from the river, and the variegated fall foliage was rustling musically. Tom stared keenly at the doctor.

"You swear that Jim Hawkins murdered his uncle?" asked the detective, in calm, measured tones.

"Blue Peter, man, I can prove it!" eagerly said the doctor.

"How can you prove it?"

"By one of the two servants old Ruddyglow employed."

"But how do you know all this?"

"From Hawkins' confession, sir."

"What! Did he tell you he was going to kill his uncle?"

"He did—a week prior to the deed."

"And his object?"

"It was to secure his money."

"Didn't Jim then know he was disinherited?"

"No. He did not. He only learned the truth on the night when the old gentleman died—when his uncle told him so, and he attempted to force the old fellow to write a codicil on the back of his will."

"How do you know what transpired that night?"

"Jim told me."

"You have mentioned the truth. But I have made a discovery. From the night Ruddyglow died up to the moment Hawkins entered your back parlor last night, you have seen nothing of Jim. I overheard all that was said last night. He told you nothing of all this, then. And I am sure he would not write it to you from his place of concealment. Hence I have one deduction to make from what you say."

"And what is that?" asked the doctor, with a startled look.

"You saw Hawkins on the night of the crime or else were a listener to what occurred in the old man's bedroom that memorable night! Which was it? You swore at the time that you were not near their house on the night of the death of Ruddyglow."

"Oh, I saw Hawkins after he left here."

"You lie!"

"Sir! I tell you——"

"I tell you, Dr. Harvey, that you were the man who, on the night Ruddyglow died, attacked me in the dark bedroom, knocked me senseless, and then aided Hawkins to make his escape."

"Well, admitting that I saw Jim Hawkins on the night his uncle died," said the doctor. "I will tell you that he said he poisoned the old man with the same mixture you found in the vial you took from him."

"How do you know I did? I never told a living soul what happened that night, and unless you were upon the scene at the time, you could not have known what happened so well."

Harvey began to fidget uneasily, and a look of nervous trepidation swept over his face.

"Blue Peter! How quick you are to pick me up on what I say," he exclaimed pettishly. "I am only explaining what he told me, that is all."

"Well, let it pass. Now tell how you are going to prove by a servant that he did the deed."

"It is very simple. As you are aware, he was living surreptitiously at his uncle's house during the two weeks Mr. Ruddyglow lay sick in bed. It was while he was under the same roof with his uncle that he commenced operations. Armed with a bottle of the deadly aconite and chloral hydrate, he stole up to his uncle's bedroom at night after all hands had retired, and when the invalid was sleeping he would pour a small quantity of the poison into his medicine. The drug gradually began to undermine the sick man's constitution until it left him the wreck he was just prior to his death."

"Hawkins told you this, did he?"

"Yes, every word."

"Strange that a man should deliberately shove his life into the electric chair in the manner you describe. But never mind—go on."

"Ruddyglow became alarmed over his unknown ailment, and called in his obstinate, self-sufficient doctor, who diagnosed the case for a different malady, as he never suspected the truth, and prescribed uselessly, as the end has shown you. Hawkins' plan succeeded."

"But how about the servant?"

"I am coming to that. Blue Peter! don't snap me up so suddenly. The woman on two different occasions went up about midnight, and, passing through the hall, she met Hawkins—once stealing out of his uncle's room, and on another occasion he was in the room and was standing by the sick man's bedside looking down at the old man, who was asleep."

"Yes—the woman mentioned these facts at the trial by the coroner. She said she had not spoken a word to the young man, but saw no criminal action. In fact, she was firmly convinced that he had gone to his uncle's room to try to conciliate the old gentleman."

"You have the dates?"

"They were brought out at the trial."

"Good! Remember them. Then arrest Hawkins, and recall the facts to his mind. He had evidently gone in there on those occasions to empty some of his poison into the medicine. Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly, in one respect."

"And that is?"

"I have your version of the story."

"And it is a true one."

"In that case you are a perjurer, too."

"A perjurer?"

"Yes. At the trial you swore by all that was holy that you knew absolutely nothing about the matter, and now you swear with equal vehemence that you know all about it. There is something mighty singular in all this, doctor, and you must answer for it in the courtroom."

"What! Blue Peter! Are you going to break faith with me?"

"Decidedly, since you have developed so much matter of vital importance."

"But this is rank——"

"It is business. Detectives are the most tricky and deceptive people in the world. They do almost anything surreptitious to gain their points, that is all."

The doctor groaned dismally.

"I have been trapped!" he muttered.

"Of course you have," said Tom, cheerfully.

"And do you really mean to put me in jail?"

"Most decidedly, sir."

"Then catch Hawkins so that I can have satisfaction."

"You can rely upon that favor being granted."

"Misery likes company, you know."

"And I hope to untangle this very mysterious matter in a jiffy as soon as I bring you and Jim face to face in court," said Tom, with a nod.

They walked on a short distance and came to the doctor's flivver, which they entered.

The detective made the physician drive the car in order to keep his hands occupied, and they went straight to the city, where Tom soon had his man lodged in jail. He then entered the machine and drove back to Fernville, where he arrived about noon-time. He went directly to the doctor's cottage, and driving into the yard, he alighted and rang the bell. The old negress answered the summons. Tom asked her if the physician's guest was in, and she said he was, and added that having had his dinner, the gentleman had gone upstairs to his room.

The detective did not know that Jim Hawkins was listening over the balustrade to his dialogue with the old housekeeper, nor did he see him run into his room. Sending the old negress into the parlor, Tom went quietly up the stairs and had just reached the top step of the flight when there sounded a pistol shot, coming from the end of the hall. The detective clapped his hand to his side, uttered a startled cry of pain, and fell upon his knees.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NEGRESS

THE bullet had come flying toward the officer, and grazing his hip—inflicting a slight flesh wound—it went on and was buried in the wall. More startled than injured, the detective recovered himself, sprang to his feet and ran down the hall. He heard a door slam, and the voice of Hawkins rang out in a derisive laugh from the room on the other side of the door.

"They are both getting desperate," the detective muttered as he reached the door, "and do not stop at attempting to sacrifice my life."

Seizing the door-knob he found that Hawkins had locked the door on the inside. Then the officer drew back a few steps, ran at the door, and striking it with his shoulders, he burst it open with a loud crash. A plain bedroom was disclosed. In the middle of the room stood Hawkins in the act of putting on his light overcoat. He was startled at the appearance of the detective, for he imagined that the shot he fired sufficed to check the officer at least long enough to give him a chance to get away.

"Holy jingo!" he exclaimed, as the corners of his nose went up, and his heavy black eye-brows were contracted in a scowl, "I thought I winged you!"

"You did—not bad enough though," replied Tom.

He had secured the doctor's revolver, and upon seeing Jim attempt to draw his weapon again the detective pulled it out and covered the desperate man.

"Don't be a clam," said Hawkins, with a slight laugh. "Drop your pop."

"I want my revolver, handcuffs, and sundry other things of which you relieved me last night."

"Oh, I'll give them to you."

Jim laid the detective's possessions upon the center table with a cool grace, and asked:

"You've got a warrant for me, haven't you?"

"Yes. Besides that, the doctor has betrayed you."

"How do you mean?"

"He swore that you killed your uncle."

"That is an infernal lie."

"Well, he swears that you confessed all to him."

"And you are jay enough to believe all he tells you?"

"Not exactly. Still, he is going to swear to it in court."

Hawkins turned as pale as death to the roots of his hair.

"So he has done that, eh?" he asked.

"Yes. Now, why don't you get even with him. He has gone back on you, and as you have a very important secret of his, why don't you disclose it?"

"Revenge, eh?"

"Of course—tit for tat."

Hawkins shut one of his dark eyes in a prolonged wink.

"Aren't you flip?" he said, significantly. "You are too sly—too cunning, Wonder. You want me to squeal, then you'd know as much as I do. But I am too artful a dodger to fall into such a snare as that."

Tom laughed good-naturedly. His ruse had been a failure.

"All right," said he. "Your knowledge will keep until I get a chance to pump it out of you."

"Should I submit the doctor's lies might hang me. Now, if I get away from you, why, the secret I've got belonging to him will pan out gold for me."

"You can't escape, Hawkins. You tried to drown Maud last night in the North river, and——"

"You must be crazy. I got off the train at the Grand Central and came straight here in a taxicab. I can prove it by the chauffeur, too."

Hawkins was restlessly watching him, a look in his eyes that meant mischief of some kind. Tom kept him covered with the revolver, and said:

"Hand me those handcuffs, Jim."

"I won't do it. Come and get them yourself."

The detective was amazed at his cool audacity and did not know what to make of it, as he seemed to be making no move to defend himself. There was an odd expression in Jim's eye, though, and the detective observed it, but did not understand it.

Suddenly his weapon was knocked aside by the old negress, who had crept up behind the detective. A laugh pealed from Hawkins' lips, and he cried to the negress:

"Go for him, Dinah!"

Tom turned around and saw the old hag and hurled her on a couch, where she sat panting. Jim Hawkins, thinking only of his own desperate situation, stole over to the open window. The detective's back was turned toward him.

He climbed out and dropped to the ground below. Then he jumped into the doctor's flivver and drove rapidly away through the village.

When the officer looked for Hawkins he was gone.

CHAPTER TEN

THE MYSTERIOUS PAPER

"I'LL search this house from attic to cellar," the detective muttered grimly. "Who knows but what I may find something of importance to myself?"

He started off and began his investigations downstairs with a will. There was a medicine rack on the wall, and he opened it, and found several vials exactly like the one which Dr. Harvey had given to Hawkins filled with a poison like that which killed Mr. Ruddyglow. They were empty. But he soon discovered another bottle containing a mixture of the drugs. The vials were peculiar in shape.

They were of foreign make, and had no name or stamp on them, but were shaped like pears, and had glass stoppers with oddly turned tops.

"Strange!" he muttered. "Could Hawkins, intimate as he was with Harvey, have procured that vial and the deadly drug here? I will take possession of these things for future use. There was something peculiar in the doctor's confession. Hawkins denied the accusations so emphatically and with such a tone of honest sincerity that I can hardly doubt him. In that case the doctor may know a good deal more about that crime than he will confess."

He finished his search of the room, and after he had scoured all the rest of the lower part of the house he went upstairs to the bedroom floor again, and entered the physician's sleeping apartment. It did not take long to make a close investigation of everything, and he came across a suit of clothes that certainly were not made for the doctor. It was a very stylish suit.

"Why, I have seen these things before," the detective muttered. "But where? Let me see—ah! I have it! They belong to Hawkins! But why are they here?"

But one drawer in the bureau remained to be examined, and when he pulled it open he was amazed to find it containing an assortment of wigs, beards, false whiskers and mustaches, paints, powders, and a general assortment of things such as actors use to make themselves up for the stage.

"Could he have been an actor?" thought Tom in surprise. Then again, these things could have been used as disguises for illegal purposes. Anyway, I will take possession of them and the suit of clothes. He was as good as his word. Just then he heard a terrific noise in the next room. The detective rushed in to see what the matter was. The old woman was no longer on the lounge, but had crept over to the spot near the bureau, and there had lifted up a small section of board in the floor, over which a piece of carpet was tacked. A tin box stood in the aperture. The negress had opened it. She withdrew a folded paper, and a low, exultant exclamation broke from her thick lips.

"Safe!" she gabbled. "I've got it. The man is a detective, and is searching the house. He might find this. Then my dear master's secret would be exposed. But I am sharp and shrewd. I will save him with my last atom of strength."

"Here! Give me that!" shouted Tom.

"Never!" was her fierce reply.

"Hand it over, or it will be the worse for you."

"I would die first!" was the determined reply.

Tom was wild, for he saw that the paper must be something of the most vital importance, which the old beldame was afraid would betray her master for some iniquity of his. He must get it at any hazard, and ran toward the old woman, but she turned and ran out into the hall. Then she dashed into the doctor's room and slammed the door shut after her. When Tom reached it he found it locked.

"What a determined old hag!" he muttered.

He was not going to be balked though, and rushing at the door, he burst it open as he had done the other one that shielded Hawkins. The old woman had fallen on her knees in the center of the floor, and clutching her face with both hands, she seemed to be choking. The detective was amazed. Rushing up to her, he violently shook her.

"What ails you?" he exclaimed.

The old woman shook her head. She was evidently strangling.

"Speak!" roared Tom. "What have you been doing?"

Still no reply from the old woman, and she fell over upon the floor, her face contorted, her eyes bulging out, and her figure convulsively twitching. Tom bent over and keenly eyed her.

She seemed to swallow something, and half arising on her elbows, she fixed a horrible glare upon him.

"I have swallowed the paper," she gasped.

"Great guns!" gasped Tom aghast.

A convulsive tremor shook the old woman's figure, and she uttered a gasping cry and fell prostrate.

One glance was enough for Tom. She was dead!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THEORIZING ON CLUES

THE detective was amazed at the action of the old woman, and stood staring at her in silence for a few moments, almost speechless.

"Dead!" he muttered at last. "The effort she made has killed her. But what secret is this she was so desperate about that she sacrificed her life to keep it! She has swallowed the paper, and it is now inside of her—safe, as she thinks. But let me see."

He bent over the old woman. Her under jaw had fallen, and he opened her lips and carefully peered into her mouth.

"She has not got a tooth left," he muttered, "so the paper was not masticated. In that event she must have swallowed it whole or torn it to do so. At any rate, the remains of the paper can easily be removed from her stomach, and I am certain of deciphering what the writing was upon it. I'll tell the coroner to get it when the post mortem examination is made."

He left the body lying where it was upon the floor, and making a parcel of the clothing, wigs, bottles and poison, he left the house. There was nothing else to be found there of any use to him, and he deemed it best to get on the trail of Hawkins as rapidly as possible, in order to prevent the man covering up his tracks.

"He has taken the auto," he muttered. "That will make it easier for me to track him. He is the slipperiest crook I ever heard of. By dint of persistent inquiries he soon learned in which direction Hawkins had gone, and followed him to the Riverdale depot of the railroad. He had left the flivver there, and then had purchased a ticket for New York on the train. It was only thirteen miles to the city, and the train had been gone five minutes, so he had a good start on Tom.

"I can count upon his hiding in New York, at any rate, since he has gone there," the detective thought, "so I will take the next train and run chances of discovering him in some of his usual haunts. In the meantime I'll go to police headquarters and have a conversation with the inspector and coroner. Doctor Harvey must be held without bail until I lay hands on Hawkins. Then it will not be a very difficult matter to discover who killed John Ruddyglow. It certainly must lie between those two men. But which of them?"

Tom boarded the next train and went to the city. He had reduced his plan of action for the future to tracking but one man, and he was supposed to be the most guilty one of the two who were under suspicion.

When he reached the city he headed for the coroner's office, and told him all that was necessary to secure the paper which the old negress had devoured. Then he went up to Mulberry street and found the chief in his office, unoccupied with work.

"Well, Tom, what is the news?" he asked.

"I have had a little adventure," the detective replied.

Then he explained all that happened to him, and showed the inspector what he discovered. The chief looked at the contents of his bundle very carefully, and compared the vial and the liquid with that which Tom had taken from Hawkins on the night Mr. Ruddyglow died.

"The same kind of bottle and drug," he commented.

"A chemist could analyze the poison and find out if the proportion of ingredients is exactly the same," said Tom; "and that would be pretty conclusive proof that the vial of poison I took from Hawkins came from Doctor Harvey's house."

"That is so."

"What do you make of those wigs?"

"Harvey was never an actor, was he?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Then he used them as disguises for another purpose."

"That seems very likely, sir."

"Now, what great purpose had he in view?"

"To marry Maud Post."

"But he had a living wife, Tom."

"Still, that was his game."

"Granted. Now what can we deduct from that circumstance alone? Let me see. He met the girl on the night Ruddyglow died, you say? And at the village?"

"Yes, she was embarrassed over it, too."

"Now, why did he have this suit of Jim Hawkins'?"

"Another mystery to me, sir."

"You said a servant saw Hawkins in the hall and in his uncle's room?"

"That is what Harvey accused him of."

"Did the girl describe Hawkins' appearance?"

"Yes, at the time of the trial."

"And I've got a copy of the court stenographer's report."

"What conclusion have you arrived at, chief?"

"Oh, I am forming a theory by putting this and that together."

He took some papers from a pigeon-hole in his desk, and selecting one, he drew it out and read it carefully.

"Well?" said Tom.

"I've got it. Read this description of the suit the girl saw on Jim Hawkins on both occasions when she saw him."

"'Black pants, fawn-colored coat and vest, and derby hat!'" Tom read aloud, then he added in surprise: "And this description tallies exactly with the suit I just brought here. It's an odd-looking outfit."

"Yes—of course. Now look at this separate parcel of false hair among the wigs—what are they?"

"A black wig, black mustache, and black eye-brows."

"The same as Jim Hawkins has?"

"Pretty near."

"But if a man like the doctor put them on with this suit, and was seen in a dim light, he could very easily be mistaken for Hawkins, couldn't he, if the servant was only casually familiar with his figure?"

"By jingo! You mean——"

"I only am presuming, Tom, that since these things are found in Harvey's possession, and Hawkins has impressed you with the belief in his innocence, nothing is likelier than that the doctor may have impersonated Hawkins and poisoned the old man himself. Remember, he was intimate with Hawkins, and called at the manor with him frequently—remember that he must have furnished Jim with that vial and poison—remember that he was anxious to marry Maud Post and was on a fair road to do it, until the dying man put a stop to it. In a word, my dear Tom, as Doctor Harvey expected to marry the girl, and did not know beforehand that her union with him would annul the will in her favor, he might have had all his plans in readiness to wed her, and hasten her possession of the fortune by killing her uncle. It is very simple. He must have known from Jim that the old man was down on Hawkins and had disinherited him. So he thought perhaps that throughout the whole game he would have plain, easy sailing.

"I hope my new-found clues may prove your theory to be the right one," said Tom.

"It remains for you to test it by arresting that bird of prey you are tracking. There is no other way. Recollect the dates on which the girl said she saw him. Then ascertain from Jim if he was in his uncle's room and in the hall on those dates. If he can prove that he was not then you can be sure that somebody else was impersonating him in order to deceive any chance observer, and at the same time lead to the impression that Hawkins was guilty. That somebody, according to my idea of these clothes, false hair, cosmetics, vials and poison, could be no one else than the doctor himself."

"Well, Hawkins is in the city now, and if you will try to work upon Harvey while I am tracking the bird of prey, we may solve this masked mystery, sir."

"I shall not remain idle long, Tom."

"Moreover," added the detective, "when the coroner produces the papers for me which the doctor's old housekeeper swallowed to keep his secret we may know a great deal more. However, I will leave these things with you now, and commence operations at once to collar Hawkins. That is the only way to discover the truth of the whole matter. And now, good-afternoon," and the detective went out.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE GAMBLING DEN

ON the following night Tom Wonder left a hotel at which he had been stopping, on Broadway, and walked through Twenty-ninth street into Sixth avenue. Upon reaching the corner he came to a pause, and, glancing keenly around, he leaned against a lamp-post. There was a saloon on the corner, at the side-door of which he occasionally glanced much as if he expected to see somebody emerge.

"The spotter told me," he muttered, "that Hawkins was talking to Leary, the noted crook, and that they were to meet here to-night to play a game of poker. I won't go upstairs until I see the spotter."

Tom had a long wait, for fully an hour passed by before the side-door opened and the man came out for whom he was looking. The moment he beheld the detective he glided up to him, tapped Tom on the arm, and said in low tones:

"He is upstairs now, playing in a big game."

"How do you know?" asked the detective.

"I've been hidden in the hall-room since twilight, and heard him come in little over an hour ago, or about eight o'clock. The crook was with him. I did not want to leave my post until I was sure I could do so without being seen."

The detective parted with the spotter, and opening the side-door of the saloon, he passed into a dark hall.

The moment he was inside he drew a pair of felt pads from his pocket, and put them on the soles of his shoes. He could now move about without making the least noise, and crept toward the stairs at one side of the hall. Ascending them to the next floor, he passed through a dark hall,

and went up another flight. Assured that the coast was clear, the detective hastened up to the top of the stairs, and softly groped his way along the wall to the door of a hall-room. It was evidently the room in which the spotter had been concealed, and the door stood slightly ajar. Tom softly pushed it open, passed in, closed the door gently, locked it, and ignited a match.

When the flame arose he saw that the room was empty and had one window, overlooking the back of the house, a torn shade covering the dirty panes of glass. At one side was a door communicating with the rear apartment in which the spotter said Jim Hawkins and the crook were playing cards. In fact, a ray of light was darting through a keyhole from the adjoining room, and the detective heard the subdued voices of two people in conversation in the back room. He listened a moment. Then he recognized the tones.

"One is Hawkins, sure enough, and the other——"

He could not distinguish for a moment, and softly approaching the door he knelt down beside it, saw that it was locked on the side he was on, and putting the match out he peered through the keyhole. He had a circumscribed view of the other room. It contained a desk, a few chairs, carpet, pictures and an electrical annunciator fastened on one of the window frames. To all appearances it was an office.

In the middle of the room stood a circular table covered with green baize, and having a "kitty-hole" in the center, a gas fixture over it shedding light down on two men who sat at the table playing cards. One was Hawkins, as he already knew, and the moment his glance fell on the other, he muttered:

"Why, he is Red Leary!"

The companion of the fastidious Hawkins was a very coarse-looking, heavy featured, red-headed man, who had made himself notorious as a bank burglar. He was attired in coarse garments, and spoke in a very gruff tone of voice to the other. They were speaking as Tom peered in, and the detective heard Hawkins say in bantering tones:

"You are in hard luck to-night, Leary—see the point?"

"I'll ha' ter give up soon," growled the other.

"Oh, don't be a clam!"

"But I'm prutty near busted. Never see sich luck!"

"That makes just a cool thousand I've won from you."

"Yer want to keep me a-playin', I see, ter clean me out."

"Oh, you need satisfaction—see the point?"

"That's so. There's no tellin' when luck'll change in poker. A cove might git busted to his last cent, an' then his fortune sometimes changes of a suddint."

"I've got to beat it out of town a while, Red."

"Oh, fly coppers after yer, hey?"

"Tom Wonder is on my trail."

"About that affair o' yer uncle?"

"Yes; and he is pressing me hard, too."

"Well, wot odds 'll yer offer me ter play fer this hundred?"

"Ten to one—a thousand against your hundred."

Intense silence followed. Both men were intent on the cards they held. Hawkins discarded and filled with two pasteboards. The bank burglar took one card, and was about to lay down his hand, when Hawkins said:

"The game is mine, Leary."

"Wot hev yer got?" asked the thief.

"A straight flush!"

Leary laughed and laid down his hand. Hawkins turned as pale as death and started, uttering a wild exclamation of intense dismay. One glance at Red Leary's cards was enough. It was a royal flush. Hawkins had lost.

It happened just as Red Leary predicted. Reduced as he was to his last dollar, the fortune of the thief had unexpectedly turned in his favor. Hawkins' jaw dropped, and his black eyes bulged out. He was fairly stupefied at his misfortune. Red Leary burst out laughing, and scooped in the money. It was then only that Jim came to his senses.

"I am ruined!" he muttered. "I tell you my case is desperate without money. Help me to get away."

"How in thunder can I do that?"

"My cousin, a young girl, is in my power. A few whispered words from me will cause her to hand over a check for a thousand dollars."

"Wot's ther grip yer've got on her?"

"Oh, a nice little secret which I can't divulge yet. You see, it's worth a heap of money to me, and I must keep it, so that I can bleed her in future again."

"Orright. Now, how's ther trick ter be worked?"

"I'll send you to her house for her. The note I will write will fetch her with a bank check. You can take a taxicab. Pretend that you are a detective, and that you caught me in some scrape, and want money to let me go. That will do—see the point?"

"Go on—write yer note—I'll kerry it."

"She lives in Greenwich avenue. No ——"

The thief nodded, filled a short black pipe with tobacco, lit it, and settled back in his chair, while Hawkins drew a memorandum-book from his breast pocket, and hastily indited a concise note to Maud. When it was finished he carefully read it over and then handed it to the bank burglar, saying:

"Here it is, Leary. It is bound to fetch her."

The thief pocketed the note, and arose to his feet.

"I'll be back in less 'n an hour, Jim," said he.

Then he left the room, and descended the stairs. Hawkins lit a cigar, and went into the gambling room adjoining the apartment he had been occupying. The detective noticed a closet in the so-called office, and as soon as Hawkins was out of sight, he slipped out of the little hall-room and entered the other apartment.

Gliding into the closet, which was empty, he drew the door shut and awaited developments.

"The crook has got Maud Post in his power for some reason," the detective cogitated, "and means to blackmail her. I will remain to see the end of this adventure, and lend the girl my protection, should it become necessary. Then I can nab Hawkins. He is a mighty bad man—much worse than I thought he was. What secret power does he wield over the girl, I wonder? I hope she will betray it—anyway I will soon learn how this affair will terminate."

Before the hour expired Jim Hawkins returned to the room, and nervously paced up and down the floor.

"Could Red Leary have fooled me?" he muttered loud enough for Tom to hear. "Perhaps he has not gone on the errand, and don't want to cash the check for me. It is time he was back."

He had hardly given utterance to these suspicions, when he heard the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs, the door opened and the voice of Red Leary said, wheedlingly:

"Right this way, leetle lady, right here into this room. I'm sorry, miss, but law's law, an' I had to nab him!"

Hawkins sank into a chair, assuming a very dejected look, covered his face with his hand, and leaned his elbow on the card table. An instant later the red-headed bank burglar entered the room, leading Maud by the arm.

"There he is, miss," said he, in illy simulated tones of

profound pity. "Jist looker his mug. It's that sad a feller could a'most weep ter look at him."

He pushed her forward, rapidly closed the door, and locked it, taking the key out and putting it in his pocket.

The girl was clad in black from head to foot. Her face was very pale, and there was a reproachful look upon it as she drew closer to Hawkins and said:

"This is a fine piece of business, Jim!"

"Ah, Maud, you came, eh?" said Hawkins, looking up.

"Yes. Your appealing letter touched my heart. You said you are under arrest for stealing, and that the detective will release you for a bribe."

"Exactly so," admitted Hawkins with a nod.

"You said this would be your last offense—that you want to save your name from a prison record, and swear that if I aid you that you will leave New York."

"Quite true, Maud."

"Well, it is suspected that you are the murderer of your uncle, but I do not and never did believe it. In proof of this, I will do what I can to aid you to become a better man, as you say you will in this letter."

"Maud, you are my good angel."

"I would like to be."

"Then prove it by paying this man."

"How much money does he want?"

"Just one thousand dollars!"

The girl started, her face flushed, and she said:

"Such a large sum? Your offense must be enormous."

"He will take no less—see the point?"

"But this is rank robbery."

"Can't help it," said Jim, shrugging his shoulders.

"I refuse to pay such a sum."

Hawkins arose with a sinister smile on his evil face.

"You refuse?" said he. "Then I'll force you."

"What? Would you dare to injure——"

"Write out a check, or I shall let the world know——"

But to the chagrin of Tom and the thief, both of whom were intently and eagerly listening, he whispered the rest. The girl tottered back, uttering a groan of horror.

"Heavens! You know that?" she gasped wildly.

"Yes. Now will you sign a check or shall I make my knowledge public to the world?"

"In heaven's name say nothing," wailed the frightened girl. "I will give you the money."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A SHREWD TRICK

A LOOK of intense satisfaction swept over Jim Hawkins' dark face, for he saw that he had Maud completely in his power, and could blackmail her all he pleased.

"Did you bring a check with you?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the girl in constrained tones.

"Then fill it out for one thousand dollars, payable to bearer, and hand it to this gentleman."

"Wait!" said Maud decisively. "I want proof that he is a detective, as he said he was."

"Can't give any," said Hawkins with a laugh.

"Then he is not an officer?"

"No; I will admit the truth—it can't do any harm now that you know how you are at my mercy—see the point? I want the money for myself. He will cash the check for me."

"Oh," said Maud, nodding her head, "you are simply levying blackmail, I see. Well, I cannot help myself, I presume. But since I have learned that you are simply coercing me, I will tell you that I will yet get the best of both of you."

"Is that a threat?"

"Certainly it is. A woman's wit is equal to any emergency, and you will soon discover that I am no exception to the rule. Give me pen and ink."

"Here they are," said Hawkins, taking the requisites down from the mantel-piece and setting them on the table in front of the girl. "But you can rest assured of one thing, Maud, and that is this: we are both very desperate men. We will brook no nonsense from you, either. In fact, you will not leave this house until you swear on your most sacred oath that you will not trick or betray us to the police. Indeed, it would be as much as your life is worth to do so, and, besides that, if you play us false I would expose your secret."

"As for your threats," said the girl, snapping her fingers, "I don't care that much for them. You would neither kill, injure nor expose me. I'll tell you why: You are such an avaricious, mean-spirited and grasping beast that you would only rob yourself by so doing, for it is very evident that you mean to blackmail me every chance you get. If I was hurt or dead you could gain nothing—absolutely nothing, for my money instead now of reverting to you would go to other quarters. So, you see, I realize how the case stands exactly, and have not the least fear of you."

"As far as I am concerned," said Hawkins, coolly, "you are right; but you seem to forget this man. He is a person who would hesitate at nothing. Do you know who he is? No? Well, I'll tell you. He is Red Leary."

"What! The bank burglar mentioned in the newspapers——"

"The same," interrupted Hawkins with a chuckle. "How does that strike you? Isn't he a lamb-like fellow to get down on you for an injury? Look out, Maud, look out!"

The girl shuddered and glanced uneasily at the notorious thief. She was not very favorably impressed with his looks. But Maud Post was not a fool. A shrewd plan to outwit these sharpers had entered her mind, and it was with her hidden idea in view that she so boldly told Jim that she would get the best of him and his accomplice.

Maud opened her reticule, and withdrew a blank check against the Fiftieth National Bank of Wall Street. Then she filled it in as Hawkins directed and signed it. The two men exchanged significant glances of approval, and smiled very blandly as Maud handed the check to Hawkins.

"Gimme ther check," said Red Leary. "Here's ther cash. I must be agoin' along now, an' you kin sen' ther gal home yerself, Jim."

Hawkins exchanged the check for the thief's money and Red Leary said "good-night," bowed awkwardly to the girl, unlocked the door and passed out. They heard him go down the stairs, and then Maud turned to Hawkins and uttered a prolonged laugh.

"Eh? What do you mean?" demanded Hawkins in tones of alarm. "What caper have you been up to?"

"I have fooled you both, as I said I would. That check is worthless."

"Worthless?"

"I have no account with the bank it is drawn against. To-morrow I will notify the bank how I was blackmailed, and stop payment on it, to save myself from trouble for uttering a useless check."

The hidden detective could hardly restrain a laugh of glee over the sharp game the girl had played on the rogues.

"What a fool I was not to foresee this!" groaned Hawkins. "Won't Red Leary be mad when he learns the truth?"

"Very mad, I presume. But I anticipated some such vile roguery as this, and was thoughtful enough to premeditate balking you at your underhanded work."

A dark scowl crossed Jim's face and he banged the table with his fist.

"You are mighty cunning, ain't you?" he sneered.

"Too shrewd for you."

"Now suppose Leary goes for me, and makes me redeem that check, how am I going to pay it?"

Maud shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"How do I know?" she replied.

"Well, that is just what will happen."

"Will you let me go now?" she asked.

"No. You must first swear not to betray me."

"I swear it, in order to make you keep my secret."

"And you must give me a good check."

"What!"

"You must have brought a check against a bank in which you have got money deposited, as you did not know what to expect, and I want you to fill it out for five thousand dollars."

The girl started, and murmured a remonstrance.

"No! No! You cannot force me to——"

"But I shall! Here, let me see if you haven't got a good check stowed away in that reticule."

And he made a snatch, and tore it from her hand. Maud uttered a cry of alarm, and started forward; but he pushed her back with one hand, opened the bag, and fumbling inside of it, he withdrew another check.

"Oh!" panted Maud, "you shall not——"

"Now fill it in for five thousand!"

The girl sat down again in despair.

"I won't!" she said, angrily.

"Write, I tell you!" he thundered furiously.

Maud picked up the pen tremblingly, for she feared that the desperate man might make good his threat. She was just about to write, when Tom pushed open the closet door, and jumped into the room.

"Hold on there, Jim Hawkins!" he exclaimed. "She shall not write a word on that paper if I have anything to say about it!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE POLICE

JIM HAWKINS was very much amazed to find himself confronted by the detective, and uttering a cry of affright, he recoiled from the side of the equally amazed girl. Maud arose, and glancing at Tom, she cried:

"After all, my trick has proven to be a success!"

"Hawkins!" said Tom sternly, "hold up your hands!"

As the detective said this he reached up to the electric annunciator on the window-frame, and setting it on the police call, he started it.

"Stop!" exclaimed the startled Hawkins.

"Oh, no!" said Tom with a laugh. "I've called the police to this house now. They will raid the place and scoop in all the gamblers, and aid me to hold you!"

"Well," said Hawkins, "it will take time for them to get here, and before they do I'll have you nailed!"

He drew a pistol, and without raising it to aim at the detective, he pulled the trigger. A shriek pealed from Maud as the report rang out, and the jingle of glass told that the bullet had missed the detective, and had gone through the window. The reverberation of the shot had hardly ceased when Tom heard the rush of footsteps in the hall.

"The gamblers are alarmed!" he muttered. "Desperate men haunt the den, and all of them hate me like poison. Once they get their clutches on me I'll have a tussle!"

"Oh, Mr. Wonder!" cried Maud, running over to Tom. "Save me from this wretch!"

"Be calm! I will take care of you!" exclaimed Tom. "Into that closet with you, Miss Post!"

And he pushed the girl in and shut the door.

The footsteps in the hall neared the door. Then it was flung open. Into the room rushed a score of men.

All hard-looking characters, too, and but a single glance was enough to show them the situation of affairs.

"Tom Wonder!" cried one.

Tom glanced keenly at them and recognized many old offenders among the gang of whom he had made enemies in times gone by. He aimed a pistol at the men menacingly.

"Get out of here!" he exclaimed.

The men scrambled back into the hall.

"Come back here!" roared Hawkins, seeing that they were deserting him. "He is alone, and has rung up the police to jail you. Why don't you take some sort of satisfaction out of his hide?"

"Don't you advance a step," said Tom.

Hawkins suddenly made a rush for the door.

The next instant he was out in the hall amid his cronies, the door was slammed shut, and Tom was left alone in the room. He ran to the door and tried to get out, but found that Hawkins had taken the key and locked it on the outside to keep him in. It made the detective frantic to find himself made a prisoner in this manner. He hurried over to the closet and opened it.

"Miss Maud, come out!" he exclaimed.

"Have they gone?" breathlessly asked the girl.

"Yes; and they have locked us in here."

He held his revolver at the lock and pulled the trigger. The bolt was broken and he opened the door. Just as the detective and the girl hurried out in the hall a fearful commotion was heard downstairs, and Tom knew then that the police had arrived in answer to his summons and had encountered the gamblers in the act of escaping.

The expressions uttered by the frightened crowd soon apprised the police of what the trouble was, and they charged, when a struggle ensued. The fight was at its height when Tom left the girl in the hall and ran downstairs.

"They are gamblers!" cried the detective as he ran into the midst of the throng in the dark hall. "Do not spare them, boys!"

He produced his electric light, flashed its rays on the struggling, shouting crowd, and gave the three policemen an opportunity of distinguishing friends from foes. Most of the gamblers tried to get away without fighting.

At the moment Tom joined in the fray the three officers were each struggling with a man apiece, and the detective attacking another, the scene of confusion increased. It did not last long, however, for all but those who had been captured having made their escape, the officers rendered their prisoners docile with their nippers.

Tom scanned all of the men. Hawkins was not among them. The detective was disgusted, and giving the man he captured into the hands of one of the policemen, he ran upstairs to get Maud. She was gone!

"What has become of her?" he muttered.

Filled with anxiety, he hurried into each of the rooms, ran downstairs, searched the floor below, and, in fact, searched the building through. It was useless. The policemen went away with their prisoners.

"Maud must have come downstairs during the excite-

ment," the detective muttered, "and has gone out in the street."

Down Sixth avenue he saw her familiar form.

She was walking slowly along, occasionally looking back, and Tom accelerated his pace to catch up to her. There was a taxi going along close to the gutter, ahead of the detective, and he did not notice that Jim Hawkins sat inside of it. Maud had not seen Tom yet.

The taxi reached the girl ahead of Tom, came to a pause, the door opened, Hawkins sprang out, rushed up to her, pressed a small sponge saturated with chloroform to her nostrils, lifted her up in his arms and got into the taxi with her again. Tom was amazed, and came to a sudden pause. The whole thing was done in a twinkling.

By the time the detective recovered his wits the taxicab had started off at a rapid pace. Tom ran up Sixth avenue after it.

"An abduction!" he muttered.

He had recognized Hawkins at a glance. Only one impression prevailed in the detective's mind, and that was the fact that Hawkins wanted to get the girl so that he could force her to sign a check for him. And it seemed as if he would succeed, for the taxicab was bowling along at a lively rate of speed, and the detective had all he could do to keep it in sight. Straight up to Central Park it went, the officer tired out, far in the rear, but still running after it with the resolve to keep it in view.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE ROBBERS' CAVE

A FEW moments after the automobile entered the park Tom reached the gateway and saw that it was gone. Then he passed further into the park and met one of the policemen coming toward him.

"I say!" he exclaimed, addressing the officer, "did you see a taxi just enter this gate?"

"It just passed me."

"Which way did it go?"

"Straight on."

Tom hurried along the roadway. Some distance further on he met another officer, to whom he propounded some questions. In this manner he kept track of the car, and arriving in the vicinity of the cave, he suddenly came to the conclusion that Hawkins meant to get the girl in that rocky den. There he would be free from molestation, and could frighten her into giving him an order for the money. Consequently Tom hurried to the cave. He saw the car he had been pursuing standing in the roadway, the door open, the chauffeur on his seat, and no one in the car. Then he got in the path leading to the cavern. At the entrance it slopes downward, and the path is rugged and pebbly, but he took great care to avoid making any noise, and went down.

As he drew close to the triangular-shaped entrance, he heard voices coming from inside. It was Hawkins and his cousin speaking. Then he drew nearer and listened intently. The voice of Maud reached his ears, her voice low and pleading, and she was saying:

"It is cruel and heartless of you to persecute me this way. I never did you any harm, Jim."

"Don't be a fool!" was the brusque reply. "You know I am in a corner and must have money to get away with. So you can end your whining."

"Then take me home—out of this dreadful place, and I will give you the money."

"No! I want it now. I'm accused on a false charge. The demons of the law are on my trail. They want to hang me for a crime I didn't commit."

"Remember that the proof of your guilt is overwhelming," said the girl. "You were seen by the servant on September 8th and 10th prowling in the hall——"

"Bosh!" he interrupted.

"Well, that is the sworn evidence."

"It is a lie. On those nights Doctor Harvey called at uncle's house to see me. He sent me to the city on an errand for him both times, and I can prove it. I did not return either night, and left him in the house. If any one killed John Ruddyglow he did it. I'll tell you why: he gave me a vial of poison at my own request, and it turned out to be the same kind of stuff that killed Uncle John."

"The truth is out," muttered Tom as he peered ahead at the gloomy entrance. "That accounts for the man's possession of the vial! It was exactly like those I got in the doctor's rack. And the poison was composed of the same substances!"

The girl's reply was in startled tones.

"Did he give you that vial?" she gasped.

"Of course he did!" replied Hawkins.

"But what did you want with it?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. Such things, I thought at the time, serve a despairing man to hurry his own doom."

"Suicide!"

"Exactly—see the point? Now see here."

"What is it, Jim?"

"That detective said I tried to drown you."

"You—drown—me?"

"Precisely—in the North river a few nights ago."

"Well, you didn't."

"I know I didn't. But who did?"

"It was Harvey!" said Maud.

"He did, eh? But what for?"

"Oh, I do not know. You know he once professed to love me. I don't believe he does now. If he did, he would not have tried to sacrifice my life."

"How did it happen anyway, Maud?"

"He decoyed me to a dock by a letter containing the lie that he could not tell me who killed uncle. Foolishly I went there and met him. Had it not been for Tom Wonder, the scoundrel would have killed me."

"Oh, you must have had talk with him first."

"Yes—so I did."

"Then you know why he tried to fix you?"

"I may have an opinion, but he said nothing to give me an inkling of his object."

"Your idea and mine must be alike."

"How so? What do you think of it?"

"Well, it stands about this way——"

Their tones were lowered, and Tom could not catch a word of what they then said. It aggravated him excessively.

"I cannot understand this couple," he muttered. "It seems so queer that they should speak in this social, calm manner after their enmity of to-night, and all they did to injure each other. There is no consistency in it, unless they want to exchange ideas before resuming hostilities."

Tom's idea was wrong. Maud had another object in view. She wanted to escape from her cousin.

To do so with more chance of success, she engaged him in this conversation to distract his attention from her plans in order to take him unawares. A moment later her object was made manifest.

She gave Jim a sudden shove that sent him falling upon the floor of the cave in a heap. He uttered a startled

exclamation, and she darted past him, and ran out the entrance of the cave. As she did so she beheld Tom.

"Come back here!" yelled Hawkins, arising to his feet.

He divined her object then, and was fearfully enraged. Then he rushed out after the fleeing girl.

Tom's hand was thrust directly in front of the startled man's face.

He recoiled with a gasp. But Hawkins quickly recovered his presence of mind, and wheeling around he dashed into the cave again. Then an idea of a disagreeable nature occurred to Tom.

"There is a back exit to the cave. He will escape!"

An instant afterward he rushed into the cave, crying to Maud:

"Stay where you are!"

Hawkins had gone flying up the stairs at the back, and Tom pursued him. Beside the top of the staircase is an abrupt descent into a pond, and Hawkins stood on this miniature cliff. He glanced back over his shoulder and saw the detective coming up the stairs after him. And without a word he sprang off the rocks down amid the water and shrubbery.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE INSPECTOR'S NEWS

TOM glanced down over the edge of the cliff but saw nothing of Hawkins in the darkness. The girl came up the stairs from the cave.

"So it was Harvey who tried to drown you?" asked Tom, as he saw the girl emerge from the entrance up on the rocks.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Did you hear what we said?"

"Every word."

"Where is Jim now?"

"He just jumped off this cliff. So it was Harvey who gave Jim that bottle of poison? And on the 8th and 10th of September he sent Jim out of the manor? Now I've got a word to say to you. It was the doctor who killed your uncle with that poison!"

"But why should he—an utter stranger to my uncle—wish to kill him? The idea is absurd, Mr. Wonder."

"Perhaps you can explain the mystery."

"How do you mean, sir?"

"Didn't he try to kill you, too?"

The girl did not reply. Tom cast a peculiar glance at her, and said:

"Wait here until I go down and see what befell him."

And so saying, he went down through the cave again, and going around the rocks to the pool, he found the spot where Hawkins had fallen down. The tree branches and shrubbery were broken and bruised at the spot, and he saw some footprints leading away amid the undergrowth.

"He has not injured himself by this fall, as these footmarks evince," the detective muttered, "and the rascal has evidently run away."

Then he called Maud down. When she joined him, he added:

"Hawkins is safe for the present again."

"Then let him go, Mr. Wonder."

"No. I won't let up until he is captured."

"Very well," said the girl, snapping her teeth.

"Oh, I know why you are so solicitous for him."

"You do? Then why?"

"Because he has you in his power, and you fear that if he is arrested he will betray you."

"That is partly the reason, sir."

"Now I want you to do me a favor. Tell me what this secret of yours is."

"Never!"

"If you do I may aid you a good deal."

"You are kind, but can do nothing."

"Look out! You may be mistaken, miss."

"I guess not. The secret is too important to expose."

"You are in Doctor Harvey's power too?"

"No, and yes."

"Well, he is in Jim Hawkins' power as well."

"A triangular game," said the girl, coldly.

"And I am going to fathom it."

"You can't do it unless either Jim or Harvey tell what they know," said Maud.

"I know it. I'll force a confession from one or the other. But candidly, will you confess what motive prompted Harvey to try to drown you?"

"I do not know—I can only guess."

"But why did you refuse to tell me who your assailant was on the night I dragged you from the river?"

"Simply because I feared at the time that you might discover the secret Harvey possesses about me."

"You were afraid he would give you away?"

"Yes, I was—I may as well tell you the truth."

"Don't you think you had better go home?"

"That is just what was uppermost in my mind."

"Then take my arm—I'll escort you there."

The girl complied. She liked the detective, but her mind was so upset by the ordeals she passed through that she had but little time for sentiment. Upon leaving the park, Tom put her in a taxicab and sent her home. Then he went to the Sixty-fourth street entrance of the park, and making inquiries of the policeman there, he discovered that Hawkins had left the park at that gate.

The officer noticed that he had gone straight over through Sixty-fourth street, from which Tom inferred that he made his way to Third avenue to get the elevated cars. Tracking the man to the station at Sixty-sixth street, he learned from the ticket agent that a person answering to Jim's appearance had just passed through a few moments before, and had gone downtown. The next move was to go down and get off at every station along the line and ask the gateman if a man of Hawkins' looks had alighted.

Owing to the lateness of the hour, and the few people traveling, it was no trouble to locate the man. He had alighted at Forty-second street. There all trace of him was lost.

The detective was obliged to give up the hunt for that night, and going to his hotel he sent out a general telegraphic alarm to the different precincts. If Jim Hawkins was met, he would certainly go to jail upon any one recognizing him after that. On the following day no news had come in, and Tom started off to begin his hunt again with renewed zeal. But scarcely had he gained the street, when he was met by the inspector.

"Ah, Tom, glad to see you, my boy. I am in luck."

"Why?" asked the officer. "What has happened?"

"I have a confession from Harvey."

"About the poisoning case?"

"Yes. By a little subtle questioning and tangling him up in his cell I have discovered that he is the murderer."

"By Jove, that is good news. How did you do it?"

"I'll tell you, but as the doctor would not mention any motive he had for doing the deed it is yet impossible to say anything on that score."

"Well, how about the crime, sir?"

"It happened this way: Harvey and Hawkins were chums, and the doctor often spent a quiet evening with

Hawkins at Mr. Ruddyglow's manor. Locked up in Hawkins' rooms, they played games of chance night after night, until the time came when Jim was disowned by his uncle. Hawkins went away. Two weeks before his uncle died he came back, and learned that his uncle was confined to his room, not feeling well. Jim did not dare to venture near his uncle's room for fear of creating a scene. So he bribed the servants to keep his stay there a secret. They agreed. On the night of September the 8th Jim sent for the doctor, explained that he was living surreptitiously at his uncle's house, and they had a game of cards in Hawkins' room over a bottle of wine. Jim had laid aside his clothing—the same suit you found in the doctor's house—and donned a new suit he had bought. When the game was half finished the doctor sent Jim to New York for him on an errand, for which he paid Hawkins liberally. Then he donned the suit his dupe had worn, put on a wig, false mustache and eyebrows, darkened his face, and with a vial of poison in his hand he stole upstairs to Ruddyglow's bedroom."

The inspector paused in his recital to let a man go by and get out of ear-shot, as they stood in the street.

Then he continued:

"Doctor Harvey entered Ruddyglow's sleeping apartment and poured some of the poison from the vial into the sick man's medicine. When he got out in the hall the servant saw him, and as he was made up to look like Jim, she imagined it was Jim Hawkins and addressed him. He did not reply, but averting his face, he hurried off to Jim's bedroom, savage at having been discovered, and yet delighted to find that he had been mistaken for Jim."

"The crook!" commented Tom, savagely.

"He took pains to get out of the house unseen that night," the inspector continued, "and went home. When Jim returned the next day he did not miss his clothes, nor had he any suspicion of what his false friend had done. On the second day afterwards, or rather it was after nightfall, Harvey again called on Jim."

"That was on the 10th, wasn't it, sir?"

"Yes. He again found an excuse for sending Jim away, and once more made his way up to Ruddyglow's room with the vial of poison, attired in Jim's clothes, and made up to look like him in order to throw suspicion on his friend, should any arise."

"He is a sly rascal!"

"Very. At any rate, he again put a portion of the drug in the old man's medicine, and while he was glancing down upon his sleeping victim, the same servant saw what he was doing, and imagined he was Jim Hawkins. He went away again that night. No more of the poison was necessary, for he had given enough."

"And you forced all this from Harvey's lips, sir?"

"Every bit. He made an almost clean breast of everything."

"Then he has actually convicted himself!"

"That is just what he has done."

"Did you mention what his old black housekeeper did?"

"You refer to her swallowing that paper?"

"Yes."

"I showed him the tin box the paper had been in, and said you found the document. He was appalled for a while, but, recovering himself, he swore that you had not. He wanted me to tell him what the paper said, and in short he got the best of me on that point, for he would not give himself away."

"Hasn't the coroner recovered the paper the old woman swallowed?" asked Tom. "That surely would explain itself."

"I have not seen him yet."

"Haven't you any idea why the physician killed the old man?"

"No. It is really a blank mystery to me, as I can't divine why he should do so. They were not even old acquaintances, and consequently could not have been enemies. I am sure that he would not have done the deed out of pure rascality, yet I can't fathom a single motive he would be likely to have."

"That tends to show," said Tom, "that all depends on the arrest of Jim Hawkins. He ought to make clear the whole thing. The doctor is in his power, you know, and a revelation of his secret might bring much to light that now seems dark and intricate."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE OLD MAID'S HOME

NEXT day Tom saw the inspector again.

"Without exception Hawkins is the slipperiest rascal this department ever went hunting. But never mind, Tom, you may nab him yet," said the chief.

"Have you heard from the coroner yet?"

"Oh, yes. He has got the paper from out of the old negress' stomach. The writing, he sent me word, is perfectly decipherable, and the paper was torn in small pieces. But he is going to paste it together on a sheet of paper, and will send it here to-day or to-morrow for you."

"That is a good bit of news. Did he say what it said?"

"No, not a word."

Tom's curiosity was sadly disappointed, but he had to restrain his impatience as best he could. The next day would probably tell the story he was so anxious to learn, and he said:

"Well, I'll have to wait, I presume. I'm ready to go again, inspector. When I return again, it will be with Jim Hawkins a prisoner, or my own body cold."

Then he left the office.

What was the likeliest place for him to find Hawkins now? he thought when he got in the street.

The detective made his way toward Greenwich avenue, and arriving at the fat old maid's house he knocked at the door for admittance, and Miss Trotwood opened the door.

"Well, well, well!" she gasped with a good-natured smile as she advanced her fat hand very cordially and shook Tom's. "I'm so glad to see you again, Mr. Wonder. But what brings you here this afternoon?"

"I wish to see Miss Post."

"Then come in—step into the parlor."

Tom complied, and found himself in a very cozily furnished apartment.

"Has she had any callers to-day?" he asked.

"No, indeed. Poor child, she is lying down with a sick headache in her own room. She has not fully recovered from the excitement of her adventure yet. It is too bad that she has got such a dreadful wicked cousin. And do you know what she told me? She nearly drove me into convulsions by saying he was the same thief that stole the jewelry you recovered for me."

"It is true, too," said Tom.

"Dear me! who would have believed it? Now, I don't

think I'll run such risks in future, Mr. Wonder, for I am going to—ah—to—ah——"

"Well, what? Why are you blushing and stammering so?"

"You know Mr. Crab, sir?"

"Ah! I see—you have consented?"

"Yes, I am going to become Mrs. Crab soon, and Cristopher has sworn in his zealous way to love, honor, respect, protect and obey me. He is a good old soul, and pretty frisky for a man of his age, and is the soul of devotion to me, Mr. Wonder. Do you know that I dote on his old shaky body?"

"Do you? Well, I wish you joy with all my heart."

"Thank you, sir. But here, I am so interested in my own affairs I'm forgetting all about Maud, and you, perhaps, very anxious to see her, too."

"Oh, there is no hurry," said Tom.

The fat and buxom old maid laughed and waddled out of the room to summon the girl. When Maud came in her face betrayed evidence of the anxiety of mind she had been passing through.

"It is a matter of vital importance which calls me here to-day, Miss Post," said Tom, after the first salutations were exchanged. "Your cousin is at large as yet, and I surmise that he may pay you a call in quest of money again, so I have come to lay in wait for him at this house."

"You are welcome to stay," said the girl, simply.

"Will the exposure of this secret of yours do you any particular harm?" asked Tom.

"More than you can imagine."

"I hope you have committed no crime?"

"Mr. Wonder, do you wish to insult me?"

Maud's face flushed indignantly.

"No, no!" exclaimed Tom hastily. "Far from it. I only can judge the case in the mysterious light in which it is presented to me. The question is justifiable."

"Pardon me," said Maud, with a smile. "I was hasty, but as I am innocent of crime of course the question hurt my feelings. No. I did no deed for which I would have to blush with shame, or fear a prison cell. You have my word for it."

"And I believe you," said Tom, warmly. "You must excuse my questions. They are natural. I have only your own interest uppermost in my mind, Miss Post. That is all. In future I shall not trouble you with questions about the matter. If I can aid you, depend on my assistance. If at any time you choose to confide in me, do so. I am your friend, and will be a good one, too."

The detective was getting bewitched with the girl, for she had made a deeper impression on his heart than he cared to acknowledge to himself. Nor did she seem to be averse to him. Such a ripening condition of affairs was bound to become serious in due time. Just then a ring came at the door-bell, and Miss Trotwood went to answer the summons.

"Is Miss Post in?"

As these words reached Tom's ears he started.

"It has turned out as I expected," he muttered. "Jim Hawkins has come. Entertain him, Miss Maud!"

The detective glided behind a portiere, and the girl arose to her feet just as Betsy Trotwood ushered Hawkins into the parlor, saying:

"Here she is, sir!"

"Good heavens! You to pester me again!" ejaculated Maud.

"My dear cousin," replied Jim, with a sardonic grin, "I'm always looking for you, it seems—see the point?"

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

STOP THIEF!

HAWKINS glanced keenly around the parlor, and seeing that the two women were evidently alone, he assumed his careless, devil-may-care air, flung himself into a chair, and lit a cigar.

"No objection, I hope, old lady?" he said to Betsy.

"Well, I declare—that is cheeky!" said Miss Trotwood.

"Ill-mannered and disgusting as ever!" said Maud.

"Oh, come, ladies, don't be silly."

"What do you want of me?"

"Wait. You'll see. How impolite you are. You haven't introduced me to this fat old party here, Maud."

"Oh! How insulting he is!" gasped Betsy.

Her face turned scarlet, and she glanced around in quest of Tom to ask for his assistance, but catching Maud's glance she was warned to keep still.

"Impolite?" said Maud. "Well, I'll introduce you. Miss Trotwood, this is the man who robbed you!"

"Goodness me!" gasped the old maid, holding up her hands in horror, and starting back.

Jim laughed sardonically again.

"Don't be afraid," said he reassuringly. "I am not going to hurt you, old gal."

"Worse and worse!" sputtered Betsy.

"I suppose she is your landlady, Maud?"

"Oh, leave her alone, and tell me what you want."

"Can't you guess?"

"Money, I suppose?"

"How well you know my chronic complaint of always being short in the purse—see the point? Maud, you are a regular little fortune-teller, 'pon my word."

He chuckled and laughed and clapped his knees, and puffed at his cigar. Tom Wonder was crouching a few feet from him behind his back, peering out through the opening between the portieres at him. The detective did not observe that his face was reflected in a looking-glass between the front windows, and that Hawkins suddenly saw it. The sly rascal did not betray the fact, however, but calmly puffing away at his cigar, he said:

"Say, Maud, can I speak to you in private?"

"If you want me to leave the room," commenced Miss Trotwood, flaring up angrily, "I will go."

"Don't trouble yourself, my fat child," said Jim patronizingly; "you are too clumsy to amble around. See the point? We are younger and spryer than you are; so if you will excuse us we will just step out into the hall for a moment and have our say out."

"Oh, certainly," frigidly said Betsy.

"Will you accompany me, my dear?" asked Jim.

"Yes," said Maud, who hoped to hold the man so that Tom could make a prisoner of him.

As they both left the room Tom stepped out from behind the portieres. The moment they got out in the hall Hawkins softly opened the front door and said:

"Tell Wonder I was too smart for him—see?"

And as Maud uttered a scream he ran out of the house and dashed up the street. The detective heard Maud's cry, and ran out in the hall, fearing that Hawkins had assaulted her. He saw the girl leaning against the hat rack, and hurrying over to her side he exclaimed:

"What is the matter? Are you hurt?"

"No—but he has fled. He must have seen you."

"Then I'm off after him at once."

Tom dashed out into the street and saw Hawkins running at the top of his speed.

"Stop thief! Stop thief!" yelled Tom.

Hawkins ran around a corner, and the detective's cries attracting the attention of people going by, they paused and joined in the chase. Every moment others added to the crowd, until fully fifty men and boys were running after the desperate Hawkins, with Tom leading.

A policeman on the corner ahead made a motion as if to stop the fugitive, when he swerved to the left, ran up an alley-way and disappeared. Tom ran in after him. The alley was beside a new house in the course of construction, which was nearly finished. As he dashed into the back yard he saw Jim leap through a window on the ground floor and vanish within the basement floor of the building. The detective came to a pause, and a policeman ran up to him and panted:

"Where has he gone?"

"Into the house," replied Tom.

"Are you going in after him?"

"Yes. Post men in front and back to catch him in case he attempts to come out."

"All right. Leave that to me."

Tom then jumped through the window and ran through the basement floor looking for his man. He was not to be seen anywhere. The cellar door was not up yet, only a yawning hole, showing where it was to be placed. Nor were the stairs yet erected. There was a ladder in their stead, leading to the floors above, and Tom ascended it. The parlor floor was empty, but he saw the footprints of the man in the dirt on the floor, and observed that they led to another ladder going up to the next floor in the hall. Up ran Tom, and just as his head came on a level with the floor above, his quick eyes beheld something whirling toward his head. It was a piece of joist wielded by Hawkins. The rascal stood over the stair-case hole, and had aimed a terrific blow at Tom's head. The detective just had time to dodge it—to save his brains—and as the joist flew over his head, he jumped up into the hall off the ladder.

"Your race is run, Jim!" he exclaimed, grimly.

"If it is!" hissed Hawkins, "I'll have revenge on you for this, you miserable cur. I've told you I won't go to jail and I won't—see the point?"

Tom sprang at him as he whirled the piece of joist around his head again, and catching hold of the deadly log, he wrenched it from Jim's hand.

The moment he did so, Hawkins made an attempt to draw his pistol.

Tom flung down the log, caught hold of his arm, and pushed Jim down upon the floor.

Then he fell on him and made an effort to get the maddened man's arms behind his back. Hawkins seemed to fear the worst. It rendered him half frantic, and he fought with a fury such as he had never shown before.

Tom was in no mood for defeat, though, and matched him in point of wrestling at every opportunity. They were dangerously close to the opening in the hall floor, made for the staircase. The detective observed it when too late. Hawkins had secured a grip on him that portrayed how desperate he was.

"I'll fire you down that hole!" he cried, "and you'll break every bone in your body!"

Tom made a frantic effort to break himself free. It was useless, though.

Hawkins' muscles were steeled up to a high pitch, and he raised the detective higher. Then he gave Tom a fling. Back tottered the detective to the edge of the opening, and he flung up his hands, uttered a groan, and pitched down through the opening like a cannonball.

Hawkins then rushed over to another ladder that led up to the roof.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE CONFEDERATES

HAWKINS did not look back once, but vanished through the scuttle leading up on the roof. As Tom fell down through the staircase opening a policeman was coming up the ladder. The detective's body struck between the officer's head and the ladder, and stopped there. Had the policeman let go his hold, they both would have been precipitated to the bottom, but he had presence of mind enough to hold on. By so doing Tom's life was saved.

"Hello!" said the startled man. "What is this?"

"Can't you see?" demanded Tom.

He caught hold of the ladder and swung himself free of the officer, gained a footing and ascended. The policeman followed him up to the hall.

"How did you drop on me this way?" the policeman asked as he joined Tom.

"The crook flung me down."

"What has become of him?"

"Didn't you see him run up to the roof?"

"No—let us follow him."

The policeman ran up the ladder, Tom after him, and upon reaching the roof they saw Hawkins lift up a scuttle on the adjoining house, and go down through the aperture.

"There he goes!" exclaimed the policeman.

He ran for the scuttle, tripped over the covering and pitched down head first into the hole.

Hawkins was going down the ladder and the policeman striking him, they both fell down into a hall closet together. Unluckily for Hawkins he fell underneath the officer and received the full weight of his body. It knocked the breath out of him. The policeman's head came in contact with the floor, and he was stunned by the blow. Just then Tom came down.

Hawkins was just recovering himself, and the detective darted over to him, and whipping out his handcuffs he caught the rascal's hands and pinioned them behind his back. When Hawkins came to a realization of his position he found himself a prisoner.

"He is safe enough now!" exclaimed Tom.

"I thought I killed him," said the policeman, who recovered.

"Hark! Here comes some one upstairs."

"The people of the house, I suppose."

It was a woman who appeared in the hall.

"Here—here!" she began sharply. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Nothing, madam, but a thief we caught in here," said Tom.

"Oh, Lawdy!" she gasped.

Then she caught sight of the policeman. It reassured her and she asked:

"Did he steal anything of mine?"

"No—we just caught him in time to prevent it."

"Now I s'pose you want to get out?"

"Yes—going over the roof is inconvenient."

"Then come on down these stairs."

She went down, Tom following with Hawkins, who began to swear and grumble over his capture in no amiable tones, for he was very much discomfited. When they reached the street, the crowd which had been chasing Hawkins came up to them, asking many eager questions about the affair. To avoid them, Tom got in a taxi with his man, and they were carried away to Mulberry street.

"You can kick all you like now," said Tom, "but it won't do any good this time, Hawkins."

"Oh, dry up!" growled Hawkins, savagely.

He took his defeat very bitterly.

When they arrived at headquarters, the chief was in his office, and a smile of approval lit up his features as his glance fell upon Tom's prisoner.

"So you have got him at last, eh?" he asked.

"I have got him, sir, as I said I would."

"Well, Hawkins, what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nothing much."

"Can you throw any light on your uncle's murder?"

"You know all Wonder saw that night?"

"Oh, yes—of course."

"Well, that's all I know."

"Where did you get the vial of poison you had?"

Doctor Harvey gave it to me."

"Do you remember ever missing a suit of clothes?"

"No. I always dress well, and have more than I use."

"Now, the 8th and 10th of September——"

"Tom told me about those nights."

"And you said you was not at home?"

"Of course I did—see the point?"

"Can you prove alibis for those nights?"

"I can."

"Where was it the doctor sent you?"

"To this city to do a little work for him."

"What was it?"

"As it was 'off color' I refuse to state."

"Oh, I see. But your alibis?"

"Well, I came directly to the O—— Hotel, stayed in on both occasions from the early hour when I arrived until the next day when I departed. The clerk knows it."

"In that case you are safe enough on one score. Now, didn't you leave the doctor at the manor when you left him, on both occasions?"

"Yes. He seemed to be intoxicated, as we drank wine, and I couldn't arouse him, but left him on the sofa."

"Ah, I see! Do you know anything about the hold he had on Maud?"

"Yes, I discovered it quite accidentally."

"What was it?"

"I'll leave that for him to say."

"Why don't you own up and end this mystery?"

"Because the secret involves both Maud Post and Doctor Harvey. Send for the girl. If she wants to explain matters I'll back up what she says."

Tom looked surprised. He saw that the man was more loyal to the girl than he pretended to be to her face. His threats had all been made to extort money from her was very evident, for he now showed by keeping her secret that he did not wish to betray it. The inspector rang a bell, a man entered, the chief scribbled a note, handed it to him, and said:

"Escort the young lady here in a taxicab."

The man nodded and withdrew.

"I have sent for the girl to try her," said the chief.

"That satisfies me," replied Jim, coolly. "I wouldn't give her away for love or money. She has got a good heart in the right place, and, in spite of all I've done against her, I'd be the last man in the world to do her any willful harm."

"That is one redeeming quality in you," observed Tom.

"It would be a good plan to get the doctor here now," said Hawkins. "I'd like to settle the whole matter at once before our trial, so as to save a long-winded affair. Courts are my abomination, gentlemen."

The inspector and Tom glanced at each other.

Things were evidently coming to a crisis, and the easiest method of disposing of the whole matter was upon the point of having at least a test.

"I like the plan," said the chief, nodding.

"Shall I fetch him here?" asked Tom.

"Yes—go."

The detective left his prisoner with the chief, and, going out, he secured Harvey.

When the doctor was brought into the inspector's office his white hair was disordered, his face was ghastly, and a wild look shone in his eyes.

He gave a violent start upon seeing Jim there, and then glanced inquiringly from Tom to the chief. That something important was about to take place he had not the slightest doubt. The very idea of what might be coming made him tremble, and as he sank into a chair he fastened an anxious glance upon the inspector.

"Well, what is wanted of me?" he asked.

And there was a tremor in every tone he uttered.

CHAPTER TWENTY.

CHRISTOPHER CRAB.

THE inspector fixed a piercing glance upon the man for the space of several moments, and then said:

"You are as good as convicted!"

Another violent start from Harvey, and he said:

"I don't see how!"

"Upon this man's evidence."

"I hope you are not trumping up any charge?"

"I am handing you pure facts."

"What can he say against me?"

"He can prove your guilt, circumstantially. You gave him the vial containing the poison, and exactly the same kinds of vials and poison were found in your house. The suit of clothing and wigs made you look exactly like Hawkins, and on the nights when the drug was put into the old man's medicine you were the only man beside Mr. Ruddyglow in the house, as you sent Hawkins off to get him out of the way. He can prove that he was not at the manor at the time the drug was administered, and your own admissions fairly condemn you all around."

"Have you sent for me to rehash this tirade?"

"No. I want to ask you some questions."

"Blue Peter! I've had nothing else lately. What is it?"

"What secret power do you hold over Maud Post?" As the chief asked this question he stared squarely into the criminal's eyes and made him drop his glance. Doctor Harvey was evidently very loath to reply.

"Is the girl here?" he asked finally.

"Not yet, but I expect her every moment."

"Then I'll not say a word."

"Why not?"

"Let her answer for herself."

"That is just what Hawkins said."

"He is squarer than I gave him credit for being."

At this moment the door opened, and the coroner entered.

He held a scroll of paper in his hand.

"Are you busy, inspector?" he asked.

"Yes—but you can speak—what is it?"

"I have here the paper taken from the stomach of this man's old negress housekeeper."

"Ah!" exclaimed Tom, and the doctor looked startled.

"Paper?" he muttered.

"The one which was in the tin box," said Tom.

The coroner handed the scroll to the inspector.

"It is a marriage certificate," said he.

The chief opened it. Harvey's face was convulsed with intense rage.

"That is valuable," said the chief, after glancing over a dozen small pieces of paper pasted on a square of heavy paper, and so pieced and matched that only a close scrutiny would show that it had once been torn.

"What does it say?" asked Tom.

"It is the certificate of marriage between this man Harvey and Arabella Crab, dated away back—let me see—a year, and over. Now I learn from Tom Wonder that Arabella Crab has been alive up to this month, and that Harvey had a legal separation from her; he was a married man while he was paying his attentions to Maud Post in hopes of making her his wife. It tends to show what a miserable, deceptive wretch this fellow is. He would have married that pure girl if her uncle had not especially forbid it before his death, thereby committing bigamy!"

The chief put the paper in his desk, and then he turned to Harvey, and said:

"You had a faithful servitor in that old black woman. She swallowed that paper in hopes of saving it from our hands. But you see that we have got it. The ends of justice have been gained despite all opposition."

At this moment Maud entered, accompanied by the man who had been sent for her. She glanced around, and her cheeks flushed, then turned very white. Approaching the desk hesitatingly, she said:

"You wish to see me, sir?"

"Yes—be seated, miss," said the inspector.

His gentle tones reassured the girl, and the coroner and the man who brought her there took their departure.

Doctor Harvey fixed a piercing glance upon the girl with his mesmeric eyes, and made her tremble. Tom was watching him, and like a flash the truth dawned upon his mind.

"He is a hypnotist and has fascinated her by his will-power," he muttered.

He glided between the girl and the doctor. This seemed to nettle Harvey, for he involuntarily gnashed his teeth, and a sullen look crossed his face.

"He won't get her in his power by controlling her will while I am around!" the detective muttered.

Maud recovered her composure the moment Tom intervened himself between her and the doctor. In that one brief glance she had felt the fearful power of his magnetic eyes searing like red-hot irons into her brain. Once freed of the spell he was putting on her, though, she had no fear of the man transmitting his will to hers, and forcing her to do what he desired whether she would or not, as he had done in the past.

"What is it I am called here for?" she asked, turning her pretty blue eyes upon the inspector.

"You see that we have both Hawkins and Harvey prisoners?" said the chief.

"Yes—I am aware of it, sir."

"Well, they refuse to answer a question I put to them."

"Indeed! And that question?"

"They decided to leave it to your will to answer or not."

Instinctively the girl realized what was coming, and a look of blank dismay flashed over her face. Her eyes were downcast for a moment, her lips quivered, and she betrayed some agitation. She seemed to be having a mental battle with two ideas, and finally came to a decision.

"And this question?" she bravely asked.

The inspector shrewdly read what was passing in her mind.

"Have no fear. You are not compelled to reply," said he, "but if you will tell me what the secret is these two men possess of yours by which they have been keeping you in such constant fear?"

"And have they refused to tell you?" she asked.

"Both have refused."

"And if I refuse?"

"It will make but little difference to me."

The most intense silence prevailed for a moment. Tom profoundly pitied the girl, for he saw that she did not want to say anything about it. While she was hesitating, there came a knock at the door, and before the chief could respond, a little old man rushed in, exclaiming:

"Is Miss Post in this 'ere place? Yeou see, Betsy couldn't rest easy onless I came after her tew lend her my pertection, and I ran after ther car jest tew see that no harm came ter ther blessed little critter."

Every one glanced up at the old fellow.

"Why—it is Christopher Crab!" Tom muttered.

The presence of the old man was a relief to the girl.

"Oh, I am so glad you came!" she cried. "But I am safe enough, Christopher—quite safe."

"I'm right glad tew hear that, I be, and—why, great sufferin' squash! What's this? Dew my eyes deceive me, or is it possible I see afore me that confounded rascal Doctor Harvey?"

"Why—do you know him?" asked Maud, in amazement, and the physician arose to his feet.

"Knaow him? Why, great paowers, he air my darter's husbin—that's what he air!"

For an instant Maud stared stupidly at the old man. Then she uttered a wild shriek, flung up her arms, and fainted dead away.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

CONCLUSION

THE cry uttered by Maud amazed every one in the room so that they all sprang to their feet. The girl laid in the middle of the floor. Christopher Crab had made a rush for his son-in-law, with his umbrella upraised, to give him the chastisement he had sworn to give, but the girl's cry brought him to a pause.

"What is the matter with her?" asked the chief.

"She has fainted," replied Tom.

"Get some water and revive her."

Tom, by laving the girl's temples, soon managed to revive her.

She sat up, bewildered at first, staring around blankly, and then pressing her hands to her temples. A policeman came in just then.

"A lady outside, sir," said he.

"Who is she?" asked the chief.

"Miss Trotwood."

"Send her in at once."

The man vanished, and the fat old maid ran in. She was panting and puffing for breath.

"Dear me!" she gasped. "Sich a time as I've had finding this place. And there, my darling old affianced had gone on ahead to see that poor Maud was in good hands, and me to hurry this way, and that dratted police officer not letting me in, and—oh!"

She caught sight of Maud just then and ended her remarks with a stifled shriek. Then she rushed over to the girl's side and clasped her in her arms. "Poor gal—poor child! what is the matter?" she added.

"Oh, Betsy, is that you?"

"Deary me—how pale you are—how you tremble."

The girl arose to her feet. She was very much excited over something, and wiping the tears from her eyes, she turned to the chief and said in tremulous tones:

"You are surprised at my weakness, no doubt, sir, but a few words from me will show you that I was hardly to be blamed for being so overwhelmed."

"If you feel ill I will send for a cab."

"No, no. I am all right now."

"What was it then that troubled you?"

"The remark made by this old gentleman."

"How—I do not quite understand you."

"The explanation is very simple. Mr. Crab said that Doctor Harvey was his son-in-law, didn't he?"

"That is what he said," replied the inspector, "and if proof of the fact is wanting I can supply it with this marriage certificate, which is all the legal proof necessary. He was married long ago, deserted his wife, and went to live at Fernville. His wife died only a short time ago—this month—and while she was living he was paying attentions to you in an effort to marry you, and thus gain control of the fortune your uncle left. But luckily your dying uncle forbade the wedding in time to save you."

"So that is his history, eh?" asked Maud.

"That is what he did!"

"And now for my revelation."

"Will you confess what power these two men had over you?"

"I shall. They have been terrorizing me with it long enough. Besides, what I have just heard relieves my mind of a terrible weight which has been burdening it for a long time. Listen—I am Doctor Harvey's wife!"

"What?" exclaimed the amazed chief.

"That is the secret they wielded over me."

"But he was married before he ever met you——"

"And," interrupted Maud, "he married me while his first wife, Arabella Crab, was yet living."

"Then it was no marriage at all."

"I have only just discovered the truth."

The mask was torn from the mystery now.

"Explain yourself," said the inspector.

"The story is very short," said the girl. "My cousin introduced me to him. He is a hypnotist and fascinated me as a snake charms a bird. We met clandestinely, and on the evening when my uncle died he so exerted his baleful influence over me that I was clandestinely married to him by the Baptist minister of Fernville.

"Then I went home. My uncle questioned me and was so bitter against Harvey that I dared not tell him my secret. Then he forbade me to marry him, and said that if I did he would disinherit me."

"Ah! I see," said the chief, nodding.

"He died ere I could tell him the fatal truth," the girl continued, "and I found that I forfeited my right to his fortune by my fatal wedding. Doctor Harvey met me, and showing me in horrible colors what a wretched life of poverty and want I would lead if I exposed our marriage, he prevailed upon me to keep the matter a secret. I obeyed him and got the fortune in due legal form."

"Poor child!" sympathetically said Betsy, kissing her.

"A fine condition of affairs. Humph!" said the chief.

"It's jest like his devilish work!" added old Mr. Crab.

"Well, I left my husband on the night we were married," the girl continued, "at the church door, and only saw him once afterwards to get his advice. Then I left him forever. When next we met it was in this city. He decoyed me to the dock where Tom Wonder saved my life. His object was to put me out of the way so that he could seize upon the cash I had in my trunk. But his plan failed, and I was not troubled by him again, for he was arrested subsequently."

"And your cousin?" asked the chief.

"He met the minister who married us, and the dominie told him what he did."

"So he got you in his power that way?"

"Yes, and tried hard to blackmail me. I feared poverty, and, therefore, was forced to comply with his demands. My trials were great—heavy."

"But they are over now," said the chief.

"For which I thank heaven. The wedding was not legal which the Baptist minister performed, so the original bequest of my uncle stands good."

Both Jim and the doctor glanced at each other. They saw very plainly that their game was a failure. There was a happy smile on Old Christopher Crab's face as he turned to Harvey and said:

"My poor darter is amply avenged. Yew hev got yewr desarts, an' I hope tew glory ther courts will deal by yew as yew hev dealt by the two poor gals yew victimized."

This sentiment was heartily indorsed by every one present.

"We have about all the evidence in the matter which can be gathered now," said the chief, "and out of the multitude of charges to be brought against these two men in court, there is scarcely one which will not insure them a good long sentence."

"Do you need me for anything else?" asked Maud.

"Not at present. But when these crooks are tried it will be necessary for you and Mr. Crab to come to court to give your testimony against them."

"We shall be there, sir."

"An' dew all we can tew convict 'em," added the old man viciously.

"I think," added Miss Trotwood, "that as I have been a victim that I will appear and just give a word, too, against that villain for robbing me."

"The more the better," said the chief, as he rang his bell and summoned an officer.

"Lock these two men up," said he. The officer seized the prisoners and led them out of the room. Then Tom turned to Maud.

"May I escort you home, Miss Post?" he asked. "Mr. Crab will be so much occupied with Miss Trotwood that he will hardly have time to attend to you."

The girl smiled. Her troubles were all over now.

"I would be glad to have you," said she, and she timidly placed a dainty hand on Tom's arm, and even the stern chief had to smile to see the good-looking detective and the girl walk out together, engrossed in each other.

The last points played by the two schemers had ended badly for them, and the detective had come out of the hunt victorious and covered with glory. The newspapers lauded his work to the skies, and a week afterward the following item was published:

TWO CRIMINALS DISPOSED OF.

Judge Silversleeve of the Supreme Court passes sentence on two hard cases. History of their crime.

"This afternoon Doctor Harvey and James Hawkins, both of whom were arrested by Detective Thomas Wonder, were arraigned before Judge Silversleeve, who passed sentence upon them. Doctor Harvey, as we have recorded several days ago, was the assassin who poisoned John Ruddyglow, an old retired Wall street banker. His object was to marry the banker's niece and money at the same time. Both of the men were pale and anxious, and when

James Hawkins was arraigned the judge expatiated upon the extreme justice of his and Harvy's trials. He then sentenced Hawkins to a term of twenty years in State's prison, at hard labor. The condemned man coolly laughed at the judge and said:

"'It's no more than I deserve—see the point?'

"He was then led out into the pen. Harvey was sentenced to be electrocuted in January, and when the death sentence was passed upon him, he said not a word, but bowed his head. Both men were then taken from the court room."

Subjoined to this report was a detailed account of the crimes of the two men; but there is no need of repeating it here. When the evening papers were issued, Tom Wonder was sitting in the front parlor of old Betsy Trotwood's house, talking to Maud about it. They were seated pretty close together upon the lounge, too, the folding doors being closed between the parlors, and the hum of voices on the other side being in the tones of the fat old maid and the antiquated Christopher Crab.

"You now have nothing to fear from either of those two miscreants, Miss Maud," the detective was saying, "for they are now placed beyond the power of doing you harm."

"The publicity is terrible!" groaned Maud.

"Well, I sympathize with you."

"How comforting you are to me, sir."

Tom's impassioned glance, though, told a far different tale. The girl observed it. And it made her blush.

"Is that all?" she asked disappointedly.

"What more could I say, except that——"

"That—what?" she asked, as he paused and flushed. The detective was embarrassed, and his courage flagging. But he summoned up all his resolution, and said:

"If you will pardon me I will confess the truth."

"Oh, Mr. Wonder, how earnestly you speak."

"Do I? Well, it is a matter of vital importance."

"Pray what can that be?"

"Love."

"And whom do you love?"

"You! Do you—could you—will you love me?"

The blushes that were chasing each other over the pretty face of the girl plainly told him that she did not think unfavorable of his suit.

Then Tom became quite bold.

He slid his arm around the slender waist beside him, imprinted a kiss on her lips, and she did not resent it.

A rousing short story, entitled "The Case of Hargrave," will be published in No. 41, out July 15th. Read it by all means.

READ THIS

To get our readers into closer touch with each other we intend to start a department for their exclusive benefit, entitled:

"The Greatest Mystery of My Life"

Every one can contribute, describing any strange, mysterious or unusual incident in your life. There is a mystery in every human career and a supernatural enigma in every human heart. Odd, baffling and bewildering incidents happen to everybody. It might be a ghostly visitation, a weird dream that came true, a voice from the dead on a phonograph record or a gypsy fortune-teller who read your palm correctly. Whether occult, mysterious or natural, send in the story and we will publish it for you. Your name and address must accompany the article as a guarantee of good faith—not necessarily for publication. Address MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Strange Experience Department, 168 W. 23d St., New York, N. Y.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

No.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, By Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, By Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert

No.
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon.
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, By Pauline Carrington Bouve
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, by L. Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, By Beulah Poynter
32 THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, By Inspector John Harrigan
33 TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien
34 AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller
35 THE CLUE IN THE BOX, by Alexander Douglas
36 TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE, By Rene Renaud
37 A DROP OF INK, by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden
38 THE TEN DOCTORS, by Allan Arnold Fox
39 THE STAIN ON PAGE 61, by Chas. T. Jordan

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THREE PARTNERS AND THREE GAMES

By PHILIPH VERRILL MIGHELS

THE "Short Cut" trail from Sacktown to Dago Summit was only used for pack and saddle animals. All along the path were yellow "dumps" where miners had searched for gold. Late one summer afternoon, a very unusual procession came down this trail. And three men, who had quit their work for the day, stood on their small-sized dump to watch it.

"New cattle an' new people, them is," ventured one of the men, a tall, bony fellow with a broad-brimmed hat on his head.

"Lizard always has to air his knowledge of horses; it's the old cowboy business creeping out all the while," laughed a handsome fellow, who possessed a certain elegant way. Stooping, he flecked the dust from his high-heeled boots.

The third man turned. A thick-set, homely young fellow he was, of medium height, with a good, large nose and sandy beard and hair. Addressing the cowboy-miner, he said with a wink:

"Do you notice, Liz, that Nobby is making himself pretty already? Eagle eye he's got for a woman, hey?"

Lizard's sobriquet in full was "Lizard Ike," a name acquired on the cattle ranges of Nevada.

"I'd like to see a whole harem of women make Hillson pretty," Nobby remarked sarcastically.

Picking a careful way down the rocky path were two saddle animals. One was being led by a lithe and well-proportioned young woman, while astride the back of the other was a man of middle age.

"Good-evening, stranger," called out Nobby, presently; "bound for Dago Summit?"

"Whoa!" said the man to his willing horse. "Yes, we are; this trail is all right, I hope."

"It is that—the camp is down a mile. Have you come very far?—good-evening, miss," continued the elegant miner.

"Good-evening," she said, in a flute-like voice; then Hillson and Lizard got their hats off with great alacrity.

"We came from Nevada," the man replied to the question of Nobby.

"Ever been to California before?" asked Hillson, addressing the girl.

"No," she said and a blush showed faintly beneath the rich brunette complexion of her soft cheeks.

Standing at ease by her horse and shaking the dust from her snugly fitted dress, she made a splendid picture. A tan was on her cheeks and delicate hands, but yet the contrast between this tint and the red of her lips and the sheen of her night-black hair was wonderful.

"My name is Weaverson," the man was saying in answer to another query put by Nobby, "and this is my niece, Miss Weaverson."

The miners removed their hats.

"We," said Nobby, "are the owners of the tunnel here, the 'Chance Luck,' and proud to be your servants."

"Thank you, gentlemen, I trust that we shall meet again." The travelers started ahead as Nobby stood aside from the trail.

"That's a beautiful girl," said Nobby, and his partners assented most cordially. The three then went to their cabin, where the evening meal was prepared.

A rather anomalous partnership was this of "Lizard," Hillson and "Nobby." Hillson, whose first name was Stanley, was a man of much refinement and education. "Nobby," or "Nobby Jack," was an ex-gambler. Lizard Ike has had a sufficient introduction.

The falling of the three together as mining partners had been thus accomplished: Hillson and Nobby, thrown together by accident, having secured transportation to Dago Summit in the wagon of a teamster, found themselves overtaken by Lizard Ike, who was leading two saddled and bridled horses and riding another to Dago, to deliver them there, in accordance with the terms of a sale. They immediately bargained for passage over the remaining distance in the saddles, and went by the Short Cut trail. A recent rain had made the way slippery and dangerous. The horse of Hillson fell, when the long descent was nearly done, cutting a long, deep scar in the sandy soil with his iron-clad hoof. Half way along the length of it gleamed the mere outcropping of a ledge of quartz, while resting near was a piece that the calk of the horse's shoe had broken off.

Reaching the fragment, Hillson gave a sudden exclamation of surprise and delight.

His practiced eye had discovered gold!

The two were by him instantly, and the ledge was soon uncovered for a distance sufficient to demonstrate its value as a find. It was agreed that all should own and work the property together.

For the first few months the tunnel had yielded a little more gold than enough to meet expenses. The ledge was widening, however, and there was reason to hope for a great bonanza.

Now came an odd condition of affairs at the cabin of the three, for Nobby Jack, Lizard Ike and Stanley Hillson, each persuaded in his heart that he possessed a prior right, began to pay most assiduous attentions to Portia Weaverson, and each to scowl no little—in secret—at what he thought the ridiculous assumption of the other two.

It was really remarkable how splendid the cowboy looked with his face clean-shaven, his glossy hair well trained and a bright silk handkerchief about his neck. Nobby Jack, for his part, waxed his long, soft mustache till the black of it was wonderful to see. He wore the neatest of clothing, kept his long, slim fingers surprisingly white, and smoothed and polished his oily speech. He had wormed the information from the uncle that the girl was an heiress, but he shared no part of his knowledge with his partners.

Hillson alone proceeded unaffectedly. He liked to call at the Weaverson home in his every-day attire, there to sit and talk, in his simple, earnest way.

Miss Weaverson made but few acquaintances in Dago Summit; she rode or walked in the hills a great deal by herself. It was "sweet to escape from everything," she said to Hillson. And restful it was, she told herself, to talk with Stanley after a siege with either Lizard Ike or Nobby Jack. She was often desperate, for do what she

would there was a dangerous fascination and charm in both of these latter admirers. The magnetism of Lizard Ike was open, unconcealed, but that of the gambler was the subtle, patient attraction of the snake.

At the end of a month Miss Weaverson was obliged to maneuver with the utmost delicacy and caution to avoid proposals from Nobby Jack and the cowboy. She felt afraid to refuse either one, and wished herself well out of all of it.

With his usual acumen, the gambler detected her ruses to keep his avowal back, and decided that Hillson stood in his way; Lizard he thought he could beat. The cowboy, too, had deep suspicions and hot internal jealousies. Hillson was greatly concerned at the triple aspect of affairs. An ominous silence had, by tacit agreement, existed between the partners, on the subject, from the first.

Fearing lest delay be fatal, Nobby Jack plotted a fearful scheme. He felt the pulse of Lizard Ike and acted accordingly.

"Liz," said he, one night when Hillson was at Weaverson's, "the quarters are getting tight for three and somebody proposes to do us up."

"Yeh mean Hillson?"

The gambler slowly winked. "Somebody has found your record and mine; he is going to tell that I am a gambler and that you once dragged a man to death with your lariat."

This was a cold-blooded lie; it was Jack himself who had hunted up the ancient history.

The cowboy sprang to his feet, his eyes ablaze with alarm and anger. "The h—l he is! How do you know?"

"Never mind how, do you want him to do it?"

"By G——, I'll riddle 'im with bullets first!"

"Now, not so fast. Suppose we use a little sense."

"Do for 'im, though, yeh mean?"

"Cert—you guessed it; are you with me?"

"I am!" shouted the cowboy, fondling a gun on either side of his belt. Then in a hoarse whisper, he added, "How ye goin' to do it?"

"Suppose he fell down a shaft, in the night—happened accidentally. In the morning we could raise a searching party—and bury him in such dazzling shape that no one would ever suspect." The gambler's face was horribly expressive.

"Good enough," said the still enraged Lizard. "I been thinkin' it was getting too hot fer all three—— Say, Nob, what's yer game after that?"

"About what?" asked the innocent.

"Oh, you know all right—the girl. Who's to stay?"

"Oh, let the best man win."

"N-n—I ain't stuck on yer way of winnin'. Why not settle the thing right up. How'd it suit fer me to take the girl an' the ore that's on the dump an' leave you the mine?"

"We haven't time to settle the thing to-night; there's the job to be done—we'll fix it after we get back." Nobby started to put on his hat.

"Hol' on, now! I'm a sticker fer gettin' things understood. We can't both hev her an' we might as well settle it up. How'd it do to decide the hull shebang with the guns or knives—long's we're in fer desperate doin's?"

The gambler gazed at his dangerous partner. "I'll tell you what," said he, "I'll play you a game of poker as soon as we're back, to see who leaves off with the girl—loser to get Hillson's—the other share in the mine. Are you game?"

The fires gleamed in the cowboy's eyes. "I'll go yeh," then between his teeth he hissed, "but play me fair or ye'd better never seen a deck of cards!"

"Agreed. Shake."

As they went the gambler explained the plan of action. In accordance with it they lay in wait for Hillson and, when he was come, informed him with a show of great excitement that the mine had been "jumped." His guns they had fetched. He must go with them to the Chance Luck, by the Black ravine, to surprise and rout the enemy. So plausible did they make the yarn appear that Stanley was hot and eager to storm the tunnel.

Climping the hill above the Black ravine, the traitors came abreast of Hillson, one on either side. At the signal of a low whistle from Nobby, as they crossed the dump of an old abandoned shaft, they suddenly grabbed their unsuspecting victim by the arms and shoulders and gave him a mighty heave.

A fearsome shriek came out of the mine; then the dull sound of a crash at the bottom.

"Let's tumble in a lot of dirt," said the cowboy in a hideous voice.

"No, no, let's get away; the place is lonesome enough, God knows; they'll be a long time finding him. Come on!"

They were pale and starting men that looked across the table at each other at midnight. A demijohn of whisky stood upon the floor, but the glasses were filled from a can, near at hand.

"If you're ready we might as well settle about the girl," said Nobby Jack.

"I'm as ready as you be," growled the cowboy. He was drinking the liquor at a desperate rate.

"A hundred dollars each for chips," said the gambler, as he dealt the cards and pushed an ante forward.

In silence then, as grim as that of a graveyard, they played.

"D——n my luck, anyhow!" grumbled Lizard at the end of half an hour.

At length he stood pat on a hand of fives and duces, betting all that he had, some thirty dollars or more.

"Sorry for you, Ike," the gambler drawled. "I guess I win the stakes and you quit pestering the girl," and he spread an array of queens and sixes that got a loud and furious curse from the cowboy.

Hammering the table with his mighty fist till the dishes in the cupboard rattled, the latter arose and reeled away like a crazy man.

"Hillson's share in the mine belongs to me—ain't that right?" he demanded, in a thick and husky voice.

Nobby Jack nodded his head and coolly took a drink.

"Time to go to bed—er any place." The wrathy Lizard rolled heavily into his bunk. But he never closed an eye; he lay there watching the gambler—as he toyed with the money and smoked a cigarette, a murderous gleam in his eye and his fists rigidly clenched.

After a time he bounded forth and came bowling forward.

"Blast you, Nobby, I ain't got enough of yeh yet—er mebbe I got too much. Anyhow we can't bunk together no more."

"Why not"

"Cause we can't, that's why. I'll play you another game fer the hull mine."

"Just as you like." The gambler laid away his cigarette to take the cards up in his long white fingers. Shoving a half of the gold and silver, that was still before him, across the table, he passed the pasteboards to the other for the deal.

The same intense and awesome silence fell upon the two again as they waged the battle. The cowboy won a hand and drank; he lost a couple and drank more. Once he had every dollar but ten on the board.

"Sumthin' like," he muttered, but in half an hour, on a bluff, he lost every dollar in his pile.

"Curse 'em an' curse 'em!" he yelled at the cards, shaking a wild and threatening fist.

He tried the bed again, but tossed himself out of it as a log is tossed from a chute.

"I'm goin' crazy!" he cried. "Blast yeh, Nobby, ye've fetched trouble right up to the cabin door. You've done me up! Hey! I'm goin' crazy!"

"Didn't I play you fair?"

"I don't know—mebbe yeh did—but I ain't got a show on earth!" Then, in the fury of despair: "Yeh ain't plumb game to give me a show an' go me a bigger stake—ye dasn't!"

"What do you mean? Did I ever back down yet, that you know of?"

For answer Lizard leaned forward and hissed.

"Yeh dasn't play yer life agin mine—the loser to go where Hillson is—an' the winner to take the hull kit an' boodle!"

"I'll play you, of course I'll play you," rejoined the imperturbable Nobby.

The bloodshot eyes of the cowboy leered at him horribly as he slumped into his chair and gulped a glass of whisky down before lifting the cards that already had fallen. The coins were again divided for chips.

"Five before the draw," bellowed Ike.

The gambler put his five to the fore.

"One card." He got it.

"Bet yeh twenty-five." The cowboy's play was frantic.

Nobby threw down his hand, and Lizard cursed.

On the next deal Ike won five more of the pieces of silver, but the hand that followed evened matters up again. Backward and forward went the money time after time. The gray of dawn was faintly visible without.

By the smirk on his face the cowboy now betrayed the fact that he held what he long had sought.

"Twenty to play," he mumbled thickly.

The gambler saw it.

"None fer me—I'm standin' pat," and Lizard crouched above the table. Nearly seventy dollars he had remaining.

"Twenty-five—no, by G——, the hull business—life, mine, gal—everything!" he shouted. With a maniacal laugh he pushed the whole of his gleaming pile to the front.

Nobby mused quietly. Starting suddenly, he whispered: "What was that?" and looked in anxiety toward the window.

The other turned. "Nothin'," he said, after a moment, during which there had been a rapid, silent movement. "What yeh goin' to do?"

"How much is the bet?" Then the gambler added: "Never mind, this is enough—I call."

"I guess I've done yeh, Nobby, hah, hah!" With hoarse guffaws the cowboy laid four kings upon the table.

"Not quite high enough," remarked the expert of the pasteboards. He dropped two pair of aces and reached for his cigarette.

As he did so the cowboy, who had staggered to his feet and come down again, with a terrible look on his face, beheld the edges of some cards that had partially slipped from the sleeve of Jack.

"You robbin', murderin' thief!" he roared, and bounding around the table, he drew a knife and leaped upon the gambler.

Then was a fearsome scene. Stabbing and slashing with his knife, gurgling and striving for breath, the great Lizard jammed his foe all over the room, upsetting table, chairs and stove, while the bleeding gambler, with firm-set jaws, threw all of his sinewy strength to the ends of those grasping fingers—from which there was no escape. Staggering, stumbling, writhing about, the two fell at last in a red and awful heap.

When the morning was old a breathless man came hurrying to tell some news at the cabin. In the middle of the floor, locked in each other's and in death's embrace were the treacherous partners.

The news that he had to tell was good, for Portia Weaverson, riding about that morning and investigating, had come upon a shaft, wherefrom were faint groans issuing. The form of Hillson was below. He was bruised and injured in many places, and the bone of his leg was broken. He had fallen far, but at the bottom lay a dog, that had lost his life there a day or so before, and on his body Hillson had struck.

A few months later the Chance Luck mine was disposed of at a good round figure. Stanley accompanied his friends to San Francisco, and there Mr. Weaverson gained a nephew.

Don't miss the story in our next number called "The Clue in the Cloth." It absorbs the interest from beginning to end.

PLASTIC MOLD FOR INJURED MEN

RESTORATION of the use of hands of soldiers injured by shells, bullets, or other missiles, is being accomplished at Army Hospitals by a unique method devised by Major H. R. Allen, Medical Corps.

The new method, says a statement issued by Surgeon-General Ireland to-day, is based on the principle that to gain the use of a crippled hand the member must be systematically used, exercised, and constantly flexed and extended. This gives strength to the fingers and palm and compels the muscles and tendons to function. To exercise the wounded hand a gelatine mold of the clasped hand is prepared, the hand is closed upon it, and this mold may be carried about in the hand without inconvenience or undue notice. By constantly squeezing and releasing the mold, the hand receives the kind of exercise required to restore its use, and wounded hands regain their faculties.

To enable the soldier to use the injured hand, a rough model of the hand may be cast in plastic gelatine or modeling composition and used in grasping any object desired.

A mold may be made to fit over any article, such as a knife, or fork, to enable the soldier to use the injured member in eating, or on a hammer or other tools. The composition of the mold is of such a character that it can be remade into any form desired. It becomes soft and plastic when placed in hot water, but will not melt or run. When softened and a mold is made it can be retained by plunging the substance in cold water, the mold becoming hard and brittle as some forms of amorphous rock or more like terra-cotta or some kinds of glass. This process of reshaping the mold may be gone over any number of times without loss or deterioration of the substance.

A CASE OF KIDNAPPING

By ANNIE LOUISE KINSELLA.

I WAS sent down one morning in a great hurry to the offices of a very eminent firm of lawyers in Nassau street. On arriving there I was ushered into the magnificent apartment occupied by the head of the firm. It is needless to say that there was no beating about the bush by such a man.

"Ah, take a seat, Detective Poynter!" he said, glancing under his bushy gray eyebrows at me. "This is a case that must be kept very quiet. Were it not so, I should not have applied personally for you, but would have confided the whole case to a firm of lawyers, whose practice lies in that way. Are you prepared to take notes?"

"I would rather listen, if it's all the same to you, sir," I returned.

"A gentleman who has served in the army was too busy to think of marriage until the end of the Mexican business. He came home, almost disabled, having been seriously wounded. Transferred to the hospital, he was attended by a lady of good family, but of no fortune—and upon recovery, or partial recovery, he prevailed upon this lady to marry him.

Mr. Cardross here took off his gold glasses and wiped them impressively, evidently in the meantime expecting me to say something. I had nothing to say.

"The gentleman was rich, and when he said to the lady that he would prefer keeping the marriage secret for some time, she readily consented, knowing that she was married and only happy to live in peace and retirement with him.

"All this was very pleasant. He took a house—which he has since purchased—in a beautiful nook in Jersey, near the seacoast, and there has been his sole domicile, so to speak, since marrying Miss Dunn."

At that name I could not help making a movement.

"You recognize the name," proceeded Mr. Cardross. "The gentleman, since that happy event, has been living, I am sorry to say, something like a double life. He has come to town from time to time, and all the world—the fashionable world—has deemed him a bachelor. He has three brothers—Captain Huntley Ray, Erskine, the eminent preacher, and Gordon, better known as Geoffrey Ransome, the actor.

"He has allowed these brothers out of the paternal estate, respectfully, twenty-five hundred dollars a year, fifteen hundred, and one thousand dollars. His rental does not exceed forty thousand a year, and this proves him a liberal brother. He was, however, supposed to be a bachelor, living in a very quiet way, and as he was expected to die early from the effects of his wounds, it was only natural that the brothers should look forward to dividing a pretty respectable 'personality' between them.

"You may imagine the horror of Huntley, and of the other two brothers, when, about a month ago, Mr. Ray, being taken suddenly ill in Delmonico's, ordered telegrams to be sent away at once to his wife at Ray cottage, with a command that she should bring his son and heir with her to receive his last embrace.

"It fell like a thunderbolt upon his brother, Captain Ray, who was with him. It must have fallen with equal force upon the other brothers when they heard it. At all events, the revelation was made, then he recovered, and the telegram was not sent after all.

"There is a point for you to consider here," the solicitor proceeded. "Captain Ray procured the address of Mrs. Ray, because he saw the telegram—copied it, in fact. Now we come to the cause of all this statement. Within ten days of this disclosure the son and heir of Mr. Ray—little Hugo—is kidnapped from the beach in the vicinity of his home during the temporary absence of his old sailor attendant; and it is our duty, and I hope our privilege, Mr. Poynter, to solve this mystery, to trace this boy out, to restore him to the arms of his mother, and his future place in the counsels of the nation."

Mr. Cardross resumed his seat with a wave of his hand, that as much as said:

"There you are! There's the whole case in a nutshell. It's for you to make it complete by finding the child." He waited for a reply. I said nothing. I was thinking. After a pause, Mr. Cardross continued:

"You have a theory, Mr. Poynter?"

"I can't say that I have," was my reply.

"Dear me—dear me!" he cried, fidgeting out of his seat and into it again. "I thought you detectives always had ideas—plans which were, as a rule, in cases of this kind, almost infallible. Permit me to aid you. Logically, the man who would profit most by this boy's disappearance—or suppression—is most likely the guilty person. The hand of suspicion points at Captain Huntley Ray. Is not that plain?"

"I don't look for my criminal where the hand of suspicion points," I returned, quietly. "Whatever seems most natural, that's what I suspect as being of no good."

"Then you don't think the captain the guilty person—the man who should be watched?"

"I think nothing at all about it—yet," I returned.

"Then what are you thinking about, Mr. Poynter?"

"I am thinking," I replied, "how I can get down to the vicinity of Dunray cottage without being suspected of being a police officer. Once there I'll be able to report my opinions to you, but only on condition that they are kept secret shall I agree to send them at all."

Mr. Cardross readily agreed to this.

I suggested that I should go as one of his clerks in charge of certain documents that required early consideration and signature. Mr. Ray was not to be hurried, and I was instructed to put up at a hotel in the neighborhood for a few days until he had made up his mind what to do.

That night I went to Jersey as a plain lawyer's clerk and, after a little "looking about," hired rooms for three nights at a hotel.

I arrived at Dunray cottage the following morning and found Mr. Ray lying on a sofa in front of an open window, pale and dejected.

"You are the man Cardross has sent me?" he said interrogatively.

I approached the window and said I was.

"I told him to send me a detective—the best money

would procure—and he has sent me a lawyer's clerk. The man must be a fool!"

"He has engaged police officers of acknowledged skill," I returned calmly.

"Why are they not here then?" he demanded.

"Oh, these men work in their own way, sir," I replied. "If, as Mr. Cardross suspects, you have enemies, these enemies are sure to have spies in the vicinity, and the appearance of a detective here, as a detective, would simply put the other side on guard, and help your inquiry in no way at all."

He paused for a moment, gazing out over the lawn in a vacant kind of way. Then he said:

"Cardross is right, and the detective who put him up to that is right," and he raised his fine brown eyes to mine, continuing, "I don't care whether the detective appears as a detective or not; I shall have full confidence in him. Have a cigar?"

I took his cigar silently, knowing perfectly well that he knew who I was, and that he would not betray me, even to the household.

I saw Mrs. Ray almost immediately afterwards, and was favorably impressed by her beautiful, calm face.

Then I took a seat in a remote part of the lawn or spacious natural platform upon which the cottage was built. I soon became conscious that a peculiar individual was approaching me. He knew nothing of my presence, and seemed to gain relief by beating his own head with his fist.

"Bear up, you lubber," he cried with every blow; "bear up, and cast a reckoning! You're a fine sort of a longshore loblolly, you are, to let the young commander slip his cable!"

This was the seaman who had charge of the boy, and who fell asleep with his hat over his eyes as the lad was playing on the beach below. I had a long conversation with him, and was satisfied that if the lad had been carried away, he had no hand in it.

I was not at all satisfied with my progress so far—for I did expect to get a clue of some sort from this attendant—and was walking thoughtfully in the direction of the upper gate to get out of the grounds, when I saw a gentleman coming in whose face I instantly recognized. The recognition was mutual.

This was Dr. McDermid, once one of our police surgeons in New York, an Irish gentleman, and one of the smartest men, I was led to believe, in the profession

"I know you like to work in your own way, but I want you as an ally," he said.

"An ally! I can scarcely see how I can assist you, doctor."

"I don't like to have patients on my hands when I can get them off. Mr. Ray won't be troubled by his wounds probably for years to come, but this shock has come upon him at such a ticklish time that if we can't rouse him up he's likely to go into galloping consumption."

"And what can I do?"

"Do anything you like, only prevail upon him to leave here."

Before I could warn him how to act he had left me; but as things turned out it was better as it was. When I reached the gate there was a crowd of poor people receiving food, money and clothing from Mrs. Ray. I don't think I ever saw a more beautiful or more peaceful face. She spoke in low tones, but that every word was a kindness to her poor friends was plain to the most casual observer.

I walked out at the gate and turned in the direction of Barnegat. I had not gone far when I was accosted by a very old woman.

"You've come down from New York to look after the lost son of the owner there, haven't you," she asked.

"How do you know my business?" I asked.

"Bless you, I come from the Bowery! I am only living wi' my gal, who's married here. I knew your face very well once on a time about Mulberry street."

"Do you know anything of the boy?"

"Well, I was ill and confined to my room for a few days, but I have been thinking—although they did not tell me the news until days after—that I saw something of the kidnapping."

"How d'ye think that?"

"Well, I did not see the boy carried off, but I was standing where we are now. There was a black, two-masted vessel at anchor over there," and she pointed straight out. "Down there, on that bit o' green, the sailor man was lying, seemingly asleep, with his broad-brimmed hat over his face, and the little chap—bless his heart—dressed just like a sailor, was running up and down that pathway to the beach.

"All at once I see a one-eyed man—an old rascal, if ever there was one—although he was dressed in a very long-skirted coat, and you would have thought that he had in the pockets of that long coat all the old-fashioned silk handkerchiefs ever sold. Well, he outs with a large white handkerchief and he waves it in the breeze, and looks toward the vessel. My eyes are not what they were, but they are still pretty good, and I see something white flickering from the deck of that vessel. He then floated a red handkerchief, and that was answered. After that he outs with a blue, and in answer to that a boat that was floating at the stern of the vessel was drawn forward, and some men got into her and then rowed toward Barnegat. Now, I thought I'd just have a look at them, so I hurried along the cliffs in that direction. However, when I got around, there was no sign of the boat. She had changed her course, and when I hurried back here, she was rowing as straight, from that little bit of beach below there, as an arrow, for the ship, which made sail immediately after."

"And you did not see the boy with them in the boat?"

"No. I never was suspecting any harm. When I returned, the sailor was still lying sleeping there, so I thought some other servant must have come out for the child."

"You say the man had only one eye?"

"Well, he might have had two, but one of them was closed like, and was spotted with green and red spots."

A closed eye with red and green spots was familiar to me, although I could not recall it at that moment.

Taking the old lady's address, I left her highly pleased.

I now sought out Jack Wilson, the sailor attendant, and after little difficulty, he said that he had been in Jersey on the morning of the abduction—that he had met some New York folks, one of them being an old Russian, with one eye.

"Why," said Jack, "he paid for as much grog as would sink a jolly boat, crew and all. Between you and me, it was the cargo I had that day that made me go to sleep when the poor young commander was captured. When I think of it I could knock my brains out!" and he commenced beating his head as before.

"You would recognize the man again?"

"Among a thousand."

"Well, get ready to go to New York with us to-morrow," I said; and I went in to Mr. Ray. The conversation I had with him had the effect of making him leap up and say that he'd go to the end of the world with me to recover his boy. Dr. McDermid was delighted with me.

During the next week I was duly introduced by Ray to all his brothers. I saw at a glance that they were incapable of treachery. The four brothers, when together, were like great good-natured boys. One night I walked with the actor, known as Geoffrey Ransome, to the door of the theater at which he was engaged. A shabbily dressed young fellow came up and spoke to him a few moments, at the end of which the actor gave him some money.

"Who is that?" I asked unceremoniously.

"Brother Huntley's eldest son. He's gone wrong a bit and his father has had a row with him."

"Has he been borrowing money?"" I asked.

"On every hand," returned Ramsome, "on the strength of his father's position in society."

After some conversation with young Charles Ray, I found that his chief fault was reckless borrowing of money.

"Get dunned, I suppose?" I asked.

"Every day. I receive a note from old Ivan Romanoff almost every day."

"I remembered at once that the man with the closed and discolored eye had that name.

"Have you one of his notes about you?"

"Yes"; and he handed me a paper.

Next morning, when I called upon Mr. Ray, he was in a state of great excitement. He had received a note offering to give up the child on payment of twenty thousand dollars, and no questions asked. He handed the note to me, and I was struck with the handwriting immediately. Comparing it with that of the letter Charles Ray had given me, we found it was the same.

Old Ivan was a notorious receiver of stolen property and a money-lender. Mr. Ray, Jack Wilson and I drove down to his premises in an automobile, before noon that day, and saw the worthy. I told him I had a warrant to search his premises, and he offered to bribe me not to go to extremes. I then said I would take him in custody for attempting to extort money from Mr. Ray after kidnapping his son. I told him how the abduction was performed —the handkerchief signals—and confronted him with Wilson.

At this he broke down and confessed all, saying that young Ray owed him so much that he felt bound to have it out of the family some way. The boy was on board a fruit schooner, commanded by his own son, and would be in Cuba for a month yet.

Mr. Ray hired a yacht, and we all sailed—one-eyed Ivan and all—to Havana, where the lad was recovered, not much the worse for his trip. Mr. Ray was so glad of his renewed health that he would not hear of prosecuting those who were guilty of kidnapping his son.

In a few weeks we will publish another splendid story by the wonderfully gifted William Hamilton Osborne. Watch for it!

MYSTERY OF THE INDIAN ROPE TRICK

THE history of the rope trick was traced in a most entertaining manner by S. W. Clarke, the editor of the *Magic Circular*, who described it as the most illusive trick in the world, with the peculiarity that nobody who wanted to see it had ever seen it, though this peculiarity was subsequently discounted by the fact that at least two of the speakers had seen a version of the rope trick performed. Mr. Clarke had traced a reference to it as far back as 1355, when Ibu Batuta, an Arab from Tangier, wrote that he had seen the trick performed at Hang Chau. Mr. Batuta wrote:

"I was entertained by the Emir in his own house in a most splendid manner. At the banquet were present the Khan's jugglers, the chief of whom took a wooden sphere in which there were holes and in these long straps and threw it up into the air till it went out of sight, while the straps remained in his hand. He then commanded one of his disciples to take hold of and to ascend by this strap, which he did, until he also went out of sight. His master then called him three times, but no answer came. He then took a knife in his hand, apparently in anger, laid hold of the strap and also went quite out of sight. He then threw the hand of the boy upon the ground, then his foot, then his other hand, then his other foot, then his body, then his head. He then came down, panting for breath and his clothes stained with blood. * * * The juggler then took the limbs of the boy and applied them one to another; he then stamped upon them and it stood up complete and erect. I was astonished and was seized in consequence by a palpitation of the heart, but they gave me some drink and I recovered. The judge of the Mohammedans was sitting by my side, who swore that there was neither ascent, descent nor cutting away of limbs, but the whole was mere juggling."

Obviously, Mr. Clarke added, the writer had mixed up the rope trick and the decapitation trick which was being performed when the great Pyramids were being built.

Another account of the trick from a German source in 1550 said: "At Magdeburg a certain magical juggler declared that he could get but little money among men and would therefore go up to heaven. Whereupon he would throw a cord up in the air, and his little horse would go up it, himself taking hold of the horse's tail would follow him; his wife, taking hold of him, would follow also, and a maid servant would follow her and so mount up in the air, as it were, linked together, the spectators standing in great admiration." Unfortunately an unbeliever declared that he had just seen the juggler go into an inn in the street. "Therefore, finding themselves deluded, the spectators went away."

The third record quoted by Mr. Clarke was from the memoirs of the Emperor Jahangier:

"They produced a chain fifty cubits in length and in my presence threw one end of it toward the sky, where it remained as if fastened to something in the air. A dog was then brought forward, and, being placed at the lower end of the chain, immediately ran up and, reaching the other end, disappeared in the air. In the same manner a hog, a panther, a lion and a tiger were successfully sent up the chain and all disappeared at the upper end. At last they took down the chain and put it into a bag, no one ever discerning in what way the animals were made to vanish into the air in the mysterious manner described."

Mr. Chris Van Bern narrated some extraordinary feats which had been performed by a Yogi in Liverpool, including his ability to throw a rope into the air, where it remained absolutely rigid only as long as the Yogi held his breath, while Captain Leon Berreley gave an explanation of the trick, which he believed to be absolutely feasible.

But even this assembly of magicians was unable to conjure up mystic carpets to convey them homeward and defy the strikers, and so the gathering was forced to disperse in search of tramcars and omnibuses before the vexed question of the rope trick could be settled

MRS. HARLEY'S GOVERNESS

By EMMA VAN HORN.

"GOT a story ready?" demanded the boy.

"What kind of a story?" queried the staff author, who was also a detective.

"A sketch," the boy answered with a grin.

"Oh, I begin to understand. Where did you come from?" I asked.

"From 'MYSTERY MAGAZINE.' I'm the new boy, and the reader sent me up because he needed a filler."

"All right I'll attend to you in a moment."

I was sitting in my study resting, after having just arrived home after working up a difficult case, and the idea of sketches had gone completely out of my head. No wonder the boy thought it strange that I did not know what he wanted immediately.

I did not feel like writing, but the manuscript was due, and had been for several days; so I began rummaging over my papers, and presently came across the unpublished account of a case that was worked up against a certain woman, who shall be nameless, but who was at last brought to punishment in a strange manner.

"There, my boy," I said, handing the messenger a manuscript, "take that to 'MYSTERY MAGAZINE,' with my compliments, and don't you bothed me for a week."

The boy grinned and took his leave, and this is the story he took with him:

MRS. HARLEY'S GOVERNESS.

Henrietta Harley was mistress of the Cliff House, and had everything that money could buy, except beauty—and that is priceless—and, besides that, she was growing old and feeble. She had several sons and daughters, but her husband had been dead many years, and as a good mother should do, she felt that she must provide well for her children.

There were tutors and a governess, and no end of servants, waiting-maids and cooks, for Henrietta was rich, and could afford to have everything she desired. Charlotte was the eldest daughter, and was her mother's favorite, albeit Howard was a noble young fellow, very handsome, and quite talented. He and his mother often quarreled, and bitter words would pass between them. The governess was a Frenchwoman named Clorinde Duhamel, and was remarkably handsome—altogether too handsome, the gossips said, to live in the same house with Howard Harley, who was a great favorite with the gentler sex. Howard had just returned from Yale college, and was riding in a limousine up the long hill leading to Cliff House, when he overtook his mother on foot, her parasol raised to protect her from the sun. Her car was proceeding slowly ahead of them, intending to wait her coming at the top, for she had taken a fancy to walk, in order to get exercise, she said. That may have been one reason, but it was not the principal one.

She had seen Howard approaching from the rear window of the car, and had alighted that she might have a chance to speak to him alone.

She stood upon a grassy bank at the side of the road, and as he advanced he stopped his machine and turned to speak to her, bidding her a cordial good-morning.

"I hope, Howard, now that you have returned with honor," she said, icily, without responding to his courteous greeting, "that you will deport yourself as a gentleman, and not pay attention to Miss Clorinde, the governess; you should be above such follies now."

"I never paid her any attentions except such as were proper and becoming. You would not have me act rudely to her?"

"You need not be so cordial as you were; you can be more distant, so as to show her that she need not aspire to such a height."

"Nonsense! the woman is no fool, and never had the slightest desire to aspire. What the devil do you mean?"

"It is not necessary to swear, my son. Young men have run away with a governess before."

"Excuse my rudeness, but you are talking nonsense," replied the young man brusquely.

"Oh, I have eyes in my head," replied the woman, who was in a strangely perverse mood that morning, and seemed to take delight in goading her son into a passion. "I have seen many tender little scenes between you two when you thought I was asleep."

"You're a fool!" snapped the young fellow, losing his temper. "When you learn how to talk sensibly, I'll speak with you, but not now. You know well enough that I have no intention of marrying your woman or having anything to say to her, good or bad."

"It is useless to deny that——"

"Then I won't." And Howard sent his car up the steep hill, sending a cloud of dust into his mother's face.

"She makes me so mad when she talks like that, that I feel as if I could kill her!" he cried, when he had reached the level road.

It had been better for him if he had never spoken those words.

He did not really mean them, of course, but they told against him afterward, and might have cost his life, had it not been for one fortunate circumstance. They were heard by one of the servants, whom Howard did not see in his distraction. The young man felt nettled, and did not care very much what he said, so long as he freed his mind. He had expected a glad welcome upon his return after so long an absence, and his reception did not at all please him.

Hungry and tired, for he had come a long distance, he was not in a mood to be remonstrated with needlessly, and he felt as if he had been shamefully treated.

Henrietta, on the contrary, seemed to feel a satisfaction at having caused somebody pain, and actually seemed happier in consequence, such was her unenviable disposition. She had been vainly endeavoring to annoy the servats all the morning, but they knew too much to show their displeasure at her disagreeable conduct, and when she had succeeded in throwing her son into a rage she became quite serene, and was particularly gracious to every one for the remainder of the day. She did not have an opportunity of being so to Howard, however, for after eating his breakfast, the French governess doing the honors in the absence of Henrietta, he took his roadster and went away.

It was known that Henrietta was wealthy, and always kept a large sum of money, beside many valuable jewels,

in the house, and it was a wonder that the place had not been robbed.

The next day after Howard's arrival a startling piece of news was made public. Henrietta Harley was found dead in her bed, stabbed, and all her most valuable jewels were missing. There had seemingly been a struggle, and the furniture was overturned and in great confusion. I was called in to investigate the case, but I did not know what to make of it. I found a woman's finger prints on the dagger-handle and they made me suspect the French girl.

The evidence all pointed against Howard Harley, although I could not believe him guilty. He was not in the house, although his bed had been slept in, and his slippers, thrown in one corner, had blood upon their soles.

There was blood on the floor in Henrietta's room, and in this was the mark of a footprint. The slipper fitted exactly in that mark, and the blood upon the sole, covering the forward part, showed further just how he must have stepped.

There were traces of blood in his washbowl, though it had evidently been emptied once, and the conclusion was that he had washed his hands, and then left the house. The testimony of the servants, who had often overheard him and his mother quarreling, served to confirm his guilt. The evidence of one man in particular, he who had heard the young man say that he felt sometimes as if he could kill her, completed the chain of proof.

He was not far away from Cliff House, and that was another thing which seemed strange to me, and I at once had him arrested.

He denied his guilt at once, and seemed horrified that such a crime should have been committed; protested his innocence, and swore that he had not been in the house at all that night. He had been angered at his reception, he said, and had gone off to a friend's where he had spent the night, and had only heard the dreadful news while at breakfast the next day.

I told him to say nothing, but await the action of the Grand Jury.

I carefully examined the room and its arrangements, and took particular notice of everything; the quaint old furniture, the hangings of the bed, the lace-curtains, and, in fact, of everything, hoping to discover some clue to the real murderer. I must confess that I was obliged to believe in Howard's guilt, even against my will, for all seemed to point toward him. Then I questioned the servants, interviewed the governess, and the latter, while she seemed unwilling to throw the onus of the crime upon the young man, said much to strengthen my belief in his guilt. She offered to allow me to search her apartments.

"For," said she, "if any one believed even poor me guilty of such a crime, I could not rest easy."

Some one had suggested, I believe, that another person may have aided Mr. Howard, and had winked slyly toward the governess, but I was satisfied that she had no hand in the terrible business.

Well, to come to the point, Howard was tried for the murder of his mother, incited by feelings of anger, induced by her cruel treatment of him the day previous. The testimony against him was very damaging; the blood-stained slipper, the blood in the wash-bowl and on a towel hidden away under his dressing-table, the declaration heard by the servant—all this seemed to point to him as the guilty person. The evidence in his favor was brief—very brief, but was so conclusive that the jury acquitted him without leaving their seats.

It was proved beyond a doubt that from the time he had arrived at his friend's house, about two p. m., he had been in the company of some one of the family all the time until the fatal news was brought to him at the breakfast-table. He had never left their sight, except when asleep, and his chum, in whose room he slept, occupying a single bed placed next to his host's, had arisen before him in the morning, and found him still asleep.

It was not possible that he could have left the house, gone five miles, murdered his mother, returned, and got into bed again, without any one's knowing it.

His car had never left the garage all night, the chauffeur could swear to that; and his chum, being a light sleeper, would have known at once if he had left the room.

"In fact, I did awake once or twice, and got up to take a drink of water," the young man testified, ""and upon every occasion Howard was sleeping as sound as a top, never moving or turning, but lying like a log just where he was when he went to sleep."

Howard was acquitted, of course, and now the question was: Who had killed Henrietta Harley?

Howard would not touch the money left by his mother, seeming to feel that a suspicion rested upon him as long as the murderer was not discovered; but borrowing enough to get along on, went into business for himself, and soon made enough to repay his friend and to enlarge his business.

The young ladies remained in the house, and an old aunt of theirs whom they had never known came to take charge of things and keep house. The French governess was retained, though the other servants were dismissed, particularly those who had testified against Howard.

Mlle. Clorinde was considered a very smart woman, accomplished, cultured, and a perfect mistress of her peculiar vocation. She seemed to have plenty of time to draw and paint, and her productions showed considerable talent; so much, in fact, that an artist who saw them induced her to take up art as a means of earning her livelihood.

She left the house only when the young ladies had finished their educations, and then was completely lost sight of, nobody knowing what had become of her.

It was five years after the murder, and Howard Harley was married and living in New York, never having visited Cliff House since the trial; but one day I ran across him in the Academy of Design, at an exhibition of paintings. It was not altogether for the sake of looking at the paintings, but I was doing a little "shadowing" on another case I was working up.

Howard was looking at a picture when I came upon him, and he called my attention to it.

It was an interior, and was worked up well, with great attention to detail, the elaboration being something painful to see, as it represented a vast amount of patient labor.

The picture represented an old lady sitting by a window in a curiously carved chair, and light shining through lace curtains of a most elaborate pattern fell full upon her wrinkled face and silvery hair. The pattern of the lace had been most industriously copied, as were the carvings on the furniture, the figures on the carpet, and the bric-a-brac on the little stand in one corner.

I gave a start as I saw the picture, for it recalled to my mind an incident that had long passed out of it.

"What does that picture remind you of?" asked Howard.

"I have been in that room," I answered, "and I know everything in it. That is a most faithful representation of the room your mother occupied at Cliff House."

"Are you sure?"

"Am I sure? Do I live? Do I stand here before you, or am I dreaming."

"You are here, of course."

"That room is the very image of your mother's on the morning of the murder, barring the confusion, and that, I

now think, was only a blind. I don't believe there was any struggle at all."

"No struggle?"

"Not a bit. I believe your mother was murdered in her bed, and that the murderess tried to make things appear as if you had done the deed."

"Why do you say murderess?"

"Because I believe it was a woman. I will bet you what you like that the person who painted that picture knows something about that crime. It's worth investigating anyway. Don't you see the artist's name in the corner? There it is—'Clara Hamel.'"

"Clara Hamel! We must find out who she is."

"Then come along."

I discovered, upon inquiry, that the artist's address was up-town in a quiet locality, where there were many artists, and we had some trouble in finding her in, but at last did so.

Clorinde Duhamel stood before me unchanged, except that she was more beautiful than ever.

"Are you Miss Clara Hamel, the artist?" I demanded.

"Yes. I am very busy. Have you any commissions?" she answered.

"Why have you changed your name?" I went on. "You were once called Clorinde Duhamel when you were governess to Henrietta Harley?"

At this sudden question she did not start nor show any signs of agitation, though she must have been terribly surprised. She merely looked at me coldly, and said: "What business is that of yours?"

"I saw your picture at the academy. Ah, I see you have some sketches of it upon your walls. You seem to have admired studying the details of that room. I would have known that chair and the curtains if I had seen them in Egypt. You made one mistake."

"What do you mean, sir?" she demanded.

"You are wearing some of Mrs. Harley's stolen jewels. Do you recognize them, Howard?"

The French girl nearly fainted. Her face went white and she clutched with trembling fingers at the valuable ornaments she was wearing. For a moment she essayed to speak but fright prevented her and she collapsed into a chair, trembling like a leaf. And to work the third degree, I gripped her arm, shook her violently, and yelled savagely:

"Now make a clean breast of it. We've got you with the goods. You can't deny your gilt. Did you kill Mrs. Harley?"

She made a feeble effort to resist me, but she was in such a panic she utterly failed, and broke down.

"Yes," she whispered miserably, "I did it."

"Did you hate Howard Harley, that you wanted to throw the blame on him?" I demanded.

"No; I loved him, and wanted to bring him to my feet. She was wiser than he thought; she knew I loved him, and tried to turn him against me. That act sealed her doom. She has haunted me ever since, and do you wonder that I could paint nothing so well as that picture? I have worked for years at it, and now it has betrayed me."

"You will go with me?"

"Yes."

She confessed the whole affair, and I was delighted to find that I had been right in all my surmises. There had been no struggle, and the crime was done with as much deliberation as if the woman had been preparing an exercise for her charges. She was tried, found guilty, and sentenced, but cheated the law by taking poison.

Howard bought the picture which had proved so good a clue, and his name having been cleared from the taint, went to live in the old house with his sisters, taking his wife with him, and soon forgot the troubles that had come upon him.

PERUVIAN BOOKKEEPING

IF you have spent precious hours computing your income tax, you still have cause to congratulate yourself that you are not a Peruvian. For the Peruvians kept their accounts by means of knotted strings—a method of bookkeeping which might add considerably to the trials of the income tax payer.

The Incas, although representing an advanced stage of civilization, and possessing a highly developed governmental machinery, a wealth of tradition and an unusually rich and expressive language, had no system of writing. Yet, lacking this, they kept accurate records of all the accounts of the Inca empire, census and tribute statements, birth and death statistics, etc., as well as private accounts such as crop and stock records. Still more surprising, they used the decimal system. Moreover, their numerical records—while not as convenient, perhaps, nor as quickly noted down as ours—were absolutely lucid and easily transportable.

A knot record consists of a series of knotted cords, depending, like a fringe, from a main cord called a "quipu" (from the Quichua Indian word meaning "knot"). The cords used in knot accounts were spun twice the desired length, then doubled and the two strands twisted together, a loop being left at the closed end. In attaching to the quipu or main cord, the pendent cord was laid around the quipu, the free end being passed through the loop formed by the doubling, and was then drawn taut.

The knots in the pendent cords represent different numbers, their value depending on their distance from the main cord and on the manner of tying. A single or overhand knot tied in a pendent cord, if it is in the position furthest from the main cord (units position) stands for one. Two such knots in the same position represent two. Two such knots in the position next furthest away from the main cord (tens position) indicate 20, or, if in the next position (hundreds order), 200. The decimal system being used, not more than nine single knots are ever found in one group.

A long knot was used in place of a cluster of single knots to express the repetition of units of the same order. The rows of knots representing units, tens, hundreds, etc., in a complete knot record were kept straight (so that they ran horizontally across the fringe), just as our columns of figures are kept straight in accounting.

Differently colored cords were used, sometimes merely as a matter of fancy or convenience with the record keeper, but frequently to indicate different accounts. A Peruvian herdsman would (and does to this day) keep the record of his rams on cords of one color, the record of his ewes on cords of another color and the record of his lambs on cords of a third color.

L. Leland Locke, of Columbia University, was the first to work out the significance of the Peruvian knot records. To him belongs the distinction of having analyzed what was probably the earliest decimal system of notation of the western world. Mr. Locke has demonstrated by testing and checking that he can readily and correctly read the knot records of the Incas. His researches were made possible through the courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

SPECIAL AGENT CRAWFORD C. ADAMS

CRAWFORD C. ADAMS was once chief special-agent of the United States Treasury Department at the port of New York. He had long been in the service of the government in different positions, and was finally transferred to New York. He was an efficient officer, but was superseded by Chief Special-agent Captain Brackett.

Captain Adams made a report in regard to the war of his officers against the smugglers operating at the port of New York. We had several interviews with Adams, and found him a man of more than common observation and shrewdness. In his report, the reader will find a great deal of interesting information on the subject of smuggling.

He said:

"As stated in my last annual report, I found, on coming to this district, that but few, if any, arrests had been made for smuggling or other violations of the customs laws, and that, among owners of steamships particularly, there was a general complaint that, while the government exacted from them heavy fines against each vessel from which goods were illegally landed when seizure was made, the persons engaged in the business were not punished. As the result of the action of this office in causing the arrest of every person known to be engaged in violating the laws, the complaints referred to ceased, and there has been a material falling off in the quantity and value of goods smuggled into the port, as compared with the former returns.

"This is particularly the case as regards cigars. It is said that formerly there arrived here, by every steamer from Cuba or Mexico, from twenty thousand to thirty thousand first-class cigars, which were landed (unless seized) without the payment of duty. Some of those expert in the business have asserted that in many instances the number smuggled at one time from a single steamer would not fall short of forty thousand.

"Making the average number twenty thousand, which it is believed is not excessive, as there were some nine steamers in the Havana and Mexican trade, two of which arrived here each week, or eight per month, the quantity of cigars landed in a year would reach the enormous number of 1,920,000. The average value of these smuggled cigars generally exceeded $50 per thousand, so that the total value of this class of merchandise smuggled into this port alone did not fall below $100,000 per annum.

"In addition to the cigars smuggled outright in the manner described, a system prevailed, and does yet, but to a more limited extent, of bringing on board at Havana or Vera Cruz several thousand cigars, and entering them upon the manifest as belonging to different persons employed on the vessel. On arriving here the cigars would be sealed up by the discharging inspector, who on application from the alleged owners, on the ground that they desired them for their own use on board ship, would deliver to each a box, which was immediately landed."

A seizure of some importance was made on the arrival of the steamship St. Laurent, of the French Transatlantic line. While the baggage of her passengers was undergoing examination, Inspector John Pullman observed that one of them betrayed a good deal of nervousness. He was a Frenchman. He had with him a handsome steamer valise, and when it was opened he earnestly protested there was nothing in it that was dutiable.

"Ah, Monsieur Inspector," he said, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Take no trouble vith me—absolutely notzing for ze good government."

"We'll see, sir," replied the Inspector, with all due official politeness.

He had served an apprenticeship as a cabinet-maker, and was accustomed to measure the dimensions of objects by the eye. He saw immediately, on examining the interior of the valise, that there was a lack of proportions between it and its outward appearance, and his suspicions were confirmed on sounding its bottom, which he found was double.

Between the upper and lower thickness there was a space an inch in depth, divided into three compartments by cross-pieces, which served to support the former. The inside of the trunk was covered with the same lining throughout, both below and above the secret partitions. In the upper part there were a few articles of clothing loosely packed. On breaking through the false bottom a score or more of small packages were revealed.

They contained articles of jewelry, which in the aggregate were estimated to be worth about $6,000. They were as follows: Forty-three gold breastpins; seven terra cotta pieces, representing slippers, and ornamental with masonic designs; three diamonds; twenty-four cameos; six blood stones; twenty-four settings for diamonds; thirteen gold watch-chains set with precious stones; forty-three gold perfumery bottles and ninety-six gold rings.

The Frenchman, when he found that his attempt to smuggle was a failure, tried to bribe the officer to allow his goods to pass. First he offered $20, and when this was refused told Inspector Pullman to name his own price. All these efforts failed, however.

Captain Adams was of great service in Philadelphia. He was a cultivated man, of pleasant manners and address. He made his mark in every office which he held under the government.

Captain Charles N. Brackett is the next notable to appear in this series. His career is very interesting.

SOME SCRAPS OF PAPER

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER TEN

A CLEVER RUSE.

REACHING a vacant table, Foss took a seat and ordered a glass of beer, and commenced to watch Suggs' movements.

The detective saw that the confidence man was alone, but, from his actions, he was evidently waiting for some one. In a short time Cole and Clews came into the saloon, and looking around, they soon discovered Suggs, when they came over and seated themselves at the table.

When the detective saw Clews, he started. In him he recognized the same man whom he had seen at the Varieties, and withal who looked like the photograph in the locket.

The three men did not wait long in the saloon, but went upstairs, where they entered one of the rooms and ordered beer to be brought to them.

At this time of the day, the rooms on the second floor were not used much, and the three scoundrels were the only persons on the floor.

As soon as Suggs and his companions were up-stairs, the detective took off his pack, and after depositing it and the basket in a corner, he quietly slipped up-stairs without being seen.

He did not know in which room the men were ensconced, and he was compelled to commence a search. He had hardly gone ten feet when he heard footsteps coming up the stairs, and on looking over the banisters, he saw that it was a waiter who was carrying some bottles of beer and three glasses. These the detective knew were intended for the men he was hunting for.

Foss hid behind a door and watched the direction in which the waiter went. The man did not go far, but stopped before a door situated in the center of the hall. He left the glasses and the bottled beer in the room and went down-stairs again.

As soon as the waiter had gone, the detective slipped noiselessly along the hall until he reached the room where the men were. He stooped down on his knees and peeped through the key-hole.

The door was not thick, and Foss could hear distinctly all that was being said. He saw the men sitting around the table and smoking while they sipped the beer from their glasses.

"The police are raising a tremendous row about Nellie Frazer and Hugh Foss' disappearance," the detective heard Suggs say, as he fixed his ear to the key-hole.

"What I can't understand," said Clews, "is what has become of the cuss's body. I left it lying in the hall, and some one ought to have found it."

Now Foss knew who his unknown assailant was, and the detective marked the man well. He was anxious to find out the fellow's name, and he strained every nerve so that not a piece of the conversation would escape him.

"Are you sure, Clews, that you stabbed him?" Cole inquired.

"As sure as I am sitting here," Clews answered.

The detective was disappointed to hear that his name was Clews. He had hoped that the man was Rose, but then he did not despair; he knew that he was on the right track, and that some one of these scoundrels had killed the widow and her child. The similarity of the man's features with those of the picture in the locket puzzled Foss.

After a short time the detective heard Suggs say:

"Let us drop this matter and talk about business. We are certain that the detective is out of our way, and we have nothing to fear. As regards the body, I suppose some of the river thieves have got hold of it."

"That's what I think," said Cole, as he lit a fresh cigar. "Now we'd better arrange our plans for to-night."

"I hope we will be more successful than we were at the detective's house and at the lawyer's office," rejoined Clews.

"We will be successful this time; there is nothing to prevent us!" exclaimed Suggs.

"Are you sure that the securities are in the Safe Deposit Vault?" Cole asked.

"Positive," broke in Clews. "I had Phil watching the building all day yesterday and this morning, and I know that they have not been removed."

"It's all right, then, and this time to-morrow we will have them in our possession," said Cole. Then turning to Suggs, he said:

"Andy, how have you fixed things?"

"Well, Clews and I got Becky and Louise to get in with the night watchman, and as the fellow was very plastic in their hands, they found out that he would do almost anything for money. Then Becky told him that she would give him a thousand dollars if he would allow us to get into the vaults to-night and take off the securities belonging to the lawyer. He agreed to the plan, and, Clews, you and I are to go there at ten o'clock this evening when he will open the door and we will walk into the vaults. We will then bind and gag him, get the securities and scoot."

"The plan is a good one, and we will be successful. Why can't we break open some of the other vaults?" Cole inquired excitedly.

"This would never do, for we would run too great a risk. I have had a duplicate key made to the lawyer's vault, and to open it will be an easy matter, while to open the other vaults we would be compelled to bore through the iron, and then when we got the doors open we might not find anything to pay us for our trouble. No, we had best be contented with this haul."

"I agree with you, Andy," said Clews; "the securities in the lawyer's vault will fully compensate us for all of our troubles."

"Where shall we meet?" Cole asked, at last, when they arose from their chairs preparatory to leaving the place.

"At the hut; I guess that is the best place," said Clews.

"That will suit," answered Cole.

The men now walked toward the door and Foss hurried away and reached the stairway just as they came out into the hall.

"There goes a man down the stairs," cried Clews, when he spied the detective. "I bet the fellow has been listening."

"It's the peddler," exclaimed Suggs, as he rushed forward after drawing his pistol. "Hold, fellow!"

Click!

Foss heard this command then the click of the weapons as the three men cocked them. He turned around, and not desiring to have a row with them, he prepared to run quickly down the stairs.

"Hold!" Suggs cried.

The detective was now bounding down-stairs two steps at a time.

Three shots rang out in rapid succession, and startled the inmates of the saloon below, who jumped from their tables and ran toward the stairs to see what was the matter.

The shots passed harmlessly over the detective's head, one of them hitting a bottle which one of the waiters was carrying on a tray, shattering it to pieces and scattering the contents over the by-standers.

"Stop the guy!" bawled Suggs, as he bounded after Foss.

Several men who had reached the bottom of the stairs, thinking that the detective was a thief, threw themselves in front of Foss and tried to stop him.

The detective's fists did some excellent work. One of the men he hit between the eyes; another he hit on the side of the head, while a third he hit in the stomach and doubled him up, causing him to knock against the other men with such force that a dozen of the by-standers were thrown to the floor.

"Stop the bum!" cried Suggs again, and then he fired.

The detective escaped the two shots, but not so with two Dutchmen who were standing in the doorway. They were both hit in the hinder part of the body. The balls had just glazed their flesh, causing it to smart, and making the unhappy Teutons think they had been severely wounded.

They both went howling down the street, one of them crying out at the top of his voice:

"Dunder und blitzen, I vos kilt—dunder und blitzen, I vos kilt!"

The frequenters of the saloon were thrown into convulsions of laughter at the spectable created by the frightened Germans.

This for a minute diverted the attention of the crowd from the detective, who rushed out of the saloon, and, before any one was aware of it, disappeared around the corner.

When Suggs and his companion saw that the game had slipped through their fingers, they were furious, but when they saw that the crowd was pressing around them, inquiring what the matter was, they thought that it was about time that they were getting out.

Telling the crowd that it was a thief, they took their departure by the back way. As they were going out, Suggs saw the pack and basket which the detective had left.

He went up and examined it, and finding that it was full of green goods, his fears about the peddler being a fly-cop were dispelled, and he exclaimed:

"Boys, I don't think the man was a fly cop; and furthermore, I don't think he was listening."

"Why?" asked Clews.

"Because his pack is made up of the legitimate wares of his trade."

"Well, we had our scare for nothing, then," laughed Cole. "But, by jingo, didn't that fellow scoot!"

"You bet he did!" cried Suggs and Clews.

"And didn't those Dutchmen howl," continued Suggs, as he fairly roared with laughter at the remembrance of the figure cut by the Germans.

All of the conspirators laughed, and they were now in a good humor as they walked out of the saloon and went down the street.

The detective did not return to Bottle Koenig's, but went direct to his room, where he changed his disguise to that of a broker's clerk.

On his way to the boarding-house he had formed a plan which would greatly astonish the thieves, when they came to rob the vault that night.

Foss went into a stationery store on his way toward the Safe Deposit Vaults, and bought a large cash box similar to the one which held the securities. This he filled with sand and small stones.

The detective had a permit in his pocket to open the vault. He knew that the day watchmen and clerks had no connection with the night watchman, and he had no fear of being detected.

Arriving at the Safe Deposit building, Foss made sure that no one was around watching the broker's vault, and then he entered the building, which was crowded with brokers' clerks and merchanhts.

The detective presented the certificate, and then after the usual formalities had been gone through with, he went to the vault, took out the box containing the securities, and put the box containing the sand into the vault, locking it after him, and then went out into the street.

He took the box and the securities to a friend's office, and, after making himself known, cautioning his friend not to say that he had seen him, the detective saw the box safely locked up in a safe, and then left the office, intending to go and call on Mr. Frazer.

At first Foss thought that he would have the thieves arrested in the vaults, but afterwards he concluded to allow them to carry off the box with the sand in it, and track them to the hut.

The detective called at the lawyer's office and found that he was not in, and that he was out with the police, trying to find Nellie. The lawyer suspected that Cole had abducted his daughter, and he gave the police a description of that worthy.

That night the detective stationed himself on the opposite side of the street and watched the Safe Deposit Building. He did not have long to wait before Suggs and his two companions came along, and were admitted by the rascally watchman.

In about fifteen minutes the thieves came out of the building carrying the cash-box, and Foss followed them, without meeting with any further adventures. The detective had procured the services of six policemen in citizen's clothes, and they stood ready to obey his commands.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ANOTHER VICTIM

THE morning after Nellie's disappearance, Mr. Frazer sat at his desk in his office. His face showed plainly the anxiety through which he had passed. The suspense about his daughter's fate was terrible, and the lawyer could not fix his mind upon the article which he was reading.

Finally he threw the paper down and arose from his chair. He walked up and down the room in an excited manner and exclaimed, as he ground his teeth:

"If that fellow Cole harms a hair of my darling's head, I will make him suffer all the agonies imaginable. If I had him here now, I would kill him."

The lawyer put his hand to his forehead and smoothed back his hair, which had turned completely gray during the sleepless night which he had spent, searching with the police in all parts of the city, in the vain endeavor to find some clue which would lead to the place where Nellie was held a prisoner.

As Mr. Frazer paced up and down the room, the office door was opened, and a messenger-boy entered. The boy handed the lawyer a note, and with trembling hands the almost frantic man tore open the envelope and read as follows:

"DEAR. MR. FRAZER:

"Come over to Oakland immediately. Meet me at Market street, and I will take you to the place where your daughter is confined.

HUGH FOSS, Detective."

As my readers know, this note was a forgery. The lawyer had heard that Foss was missing, but then when he read the note he thought that the detective might have gone to Oakland, and had made it appear that he was dead for a purpose.

The lawyer said nothing about from whom he had received the note, but placed it in his pocket, put on his hat, and as he was about to go out he said to his office boy:

"If any one calls, tell them that I am out with the police searching for my daughter, and there is no telling when I may return."

The lawyer went direct to the ferry leading to Oakland, and was just in time to catch the boat. Arriving at the long wharf, Mr. Frazer took the train, and a few minutes afterwards he was standing at the depot, on Market street, Oakland, anxiously looking for Foss.

The lawyer waited until the train drew out of the depot, but could see no sign of the detective. As he was about to enter the hotel across the street, a man stepped up behind him, and laying his hand upon Mr. Frazer's shoulder to attract his attention, said:

"Are you Mr. Frazer?"

"That's my name. What do you want?"

The lawyer turned sharply around and eyed the man who had accosted him. The man was tall and slim, his hair was red and his complexion was rather florid.

He was neatly dressed in a suit of black diagonal cloth, wore a high hat, sported a diamond in his shirt front, and in his left hand carried a heavy iron-wood cane. The man looked steadily at Mr. Frazer, and without flinching, he said:

"I have been sent by Foss to bring you to the place where your daughter is."

"Why didn't Foss come himself to meet me?" asked the lawyer, as a glimmer of suspicion flashed across his mind.

"Miss Frazer was taken sick, and the detective was forced to bring her into my house. He did not care about leaving her, so he described you to me and asked me if I wouldn't go and meet you and bring you to the house."

"Where is your house situated?"

"On the Berkely road. We will go in my buggy."

"How came my daughter to be so far away?"

"The scoundrels who abducted her took her to the insane asylum at Berkely, where she was tracked by the detective and rescued."

(To be continued.)

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CURRENT NEWS

VAST DISTANCE

Next time you are impatient and fretting because "central" keeps you waiting ten seconds for a connection, writes Isabel M. Lewis, of the U. S. Naval Observatory, in the Electrical Experimenter, imagine that your best girl is on Neptune. You say "hello" and it takes exactly four hours and two minutes for "hello" to get up to Neptune, and then you have to wait four hours more to give your sweetheart a chance to say "hello" in return. While if she were on Alpha Centauri, it would take your voice more than four years to get to her and an equal time for her voice to get back, although you know that electricity travels at the rate of 184,324 miles a second.

PARADISE KEY

Mr. W. E. Safford, in a lecture before the Botanical Society of Washington, recently called attention to the great botanical interest attaching to Paradise Key, an island in the heart of the Florida Everglades, some ninety miles south of Lake Okechobee. This island is unique as an example, within the United States, of a subtropical jungle unspoiled by man. Though the temperature sometimes falls below the freezing point, many tropical plants abound, including lofty royal palms, which have given the name of Royal Palm State Park to a tract of land in which Paradise Key is included. A memoir by Mr. Safford on the physical geography and botany of this region is to be published by the Smithsonian Institution.

CASTOR OIL

The rapid growth of the castor-oil plant has become proverbial. Some commentators have declared that the plant known as Jonas' gourd was the castor-oil plant. There are vast plains in Bengal covered with the oil-producing vegetable. Immediately after the monsoon, when the water has receded, the peasant rakes the mire and puts the oil-plant seeds on the ground, two by two. The plants rapidly develop their great leaves and produce their fruit, which grows in groups of capsules, acquiring a coppery green color mottled with purple and rich carmine. When the hot sun has dried the pods they burst. The women and children watch the pods and, when the first crack appears, they are ready to catch the precious seeds within. When the seeds have dried a few days the natives toast them, crush them in a mortar, and plunge them in boiling water, when the oil rises to the surface.

"SPOOK POLICEMEN."

Pottsville, Pa., has a genuine ghost sensation and the police department is puzzled over the weird sounds which come from the haunted building. One of Pottsville's principal business houses, No. 7 North Centre street, is the home of the alleged ghost, and the spectacle of policemen standing about there, waiting for an opportunity to arrest the alleged unearthly spectre, is a novel one.

The building is devoted to general mercantile purposes and offices and inhabited by hard-headed business men and lawyers. The police department had an idea that mischievous boys were the cause of the mysterious wailings about the building and a number of boys were examined without shedding any light. Some policemen were of the opinion that a cat might have become imprisoned in the walls and be responsible, but the sounds were too human-like for such origin. The patrol is to be continued until the mystery is solved.

MAN FIGHTS JELLYFISH.

G. H. Wilson was sent to the Cottage Hospital, Santa Barbara, Cal., in a critical condition recently. He had a life and death struggle with a huge jellyfish. Four hundred feet from shore, off Serena, Wilson was suddenly attacked.

He saw before him what he later said looked like a great sheet of butter and eggs. Suddenly the strips of yellow and white began to separate from the mass and extend toward him. He turned to swim out of reach, when the creature threw its tentacles about him and the mad fight was on. In the struggle Wilson broke the mass into fragments, but reached the shore exhausted, and his face and shoulders stinging as though from scalds.

At the hospital it was said that the patient would recover. His pain at times was so intense that morphine had to be administered. His shoulders and face resemble one mass of poison oak burns.

SNAKES KILL 23,900 PERSONS IN INDIA

The American Consul, C. M. Haywood, stationed at Calcutta, India, states in a Government report that more than 26,000 persons lost their lives in the country last year because of snakes and wild animals—the snakes claiming by far the larger number of victims.

To be exact, the consul says that 23,900 persons died in India last year as a result of snake bite, and that 2,176 persons were killed by wild animals. This is an increase of 300 over the previous year as regards fatalities from snake bite and an increase of 100 as regards the number killed by animals.

About 1,000 of the persons who lost their lives through being attacked by wild animals are credited to the tigers. The leopards claimed 339, wolves and bears killed 280, and elephants and hyenas 85. About 100 persons were killed by wild hogs and twice as many by alligators and crocodiles.

India pays a reward for killing of poisonous snakes and dangerous wild animals, and last year was called upon to pay for more than 70,000 snakes. The bounty is small upon snakes, however, and the total amount paid out by the Government for their destruction was only $1,000. But the bounty paid for killing wild animals was much greater, amounting to $54,100.

Of the animals upon which bounty was paid, 6,000 were leopards, 1,200 were tigers, 2,700 were bears and 2,000 wolves. In each instance the number showed a small increase over the previous year.

BLOOD PRESSURE INCREASES IN TROPICS

That white persons find difficulty in becoming acclimatized in the tropics is well known, but there is a wide divergence of opinion as to the reason. Two Dutch observers, C. D. de Langen and H. Schut, point out in the Tropical Bulletin that there is a real difference between the blood of Europeans in the tropics and at home.

The blood pressure always increases and very soon after arrival the quantity of blood sugar also increases. In the opinion of Langen and Schut this must be ascribed to the climate itself, especially to the temperature, and not to the intensity of the light, for in the mountainous districts of Java one gets a lower figure, although the rays are much stronger than at the lower altitudes.

The authors advise, therefore, that diabetics, persons with a tendency to tuberculosis or high blood pressure be absolutely dissuaded from settling in the tropics, at any rate in the lowlands.

SEEING IN THE DARK

Cats cannot see in the real dark any more than human beings. These animals can find their way in the dark and can see more than a human being because of one distinct difference in their eyes, which may for them be considered an advantage. The pupils of their eyes can, therefore, let more light into their eyes than people. The result is that when it is so dark that you cannot see a thing and you decide it is really dark, the cat can still see, because there is always a little more light left, and she can open the pupils of her eyes and make them larger, thus letting in more light, and the little bit of light there is still left gets into her eyes, and she is able to see, says the Book of Wonders. But in a really dark room a cat could see no more than you can. You see, our eyes open and shut more or less like those of a cat, according to the intensity of the light. When you go out of the dark and shaded room into the bright sunlight and look at the sun, you naturally squint your eyes without deliberately intending to do so. This is Nature's way of preventing too much light getting into your eyes at one time. Gradually the pupils of your eyes contract and get smaller, until you can see, without squinting, anything in the sunlight. If, then, you were to go right back into a dark or shaded room, you would have to wait a moment or two before you could see things distinctly in the room—until the pupils of your eyes had dilated (became larger), so as to let in enough light to enable you to see normally. The eye automatically enlarges and contracts the pupil of the eye, to enable us to see distinctly in either light or less light places.

TO TELL THRIFT STORIES

On the principle that the best incentive to thrift is the other fellow's real story of how he saved money, made an investment, bought Liberty Bonds or War Savings Stamps, or real estate, "Telephone Topics," the employees' periodical of the New England Telephone & Telegraph Co., asks the telephone workers to furnish personal thrift stories for its pages.

"We find ourselves breathlessly interested," say the editor, "in stories of men who made fortunes overnight, but we fail to remember that he who wins the gambler's reward takes the gambler's chance, and that for the one gambler who wins a fortune in that way there are dozens, and perhaps hundreds, who lose all they have. We do not hear of these cases, however. There is no sensational news value in them.

"Likewise there is very little sensational news value in the story of a man who remembers the old grammar school formula: 'Ten mills make one cent—ten cents make one dime—ten dimes make one dollar,' and so on. But he is the fellow who in the sunset of life will have accumulated a reserve sufficient to make him independent of the assistance of his children or other relatives or of the charity of the world. He may not have a great fortune, but a great fortune is a needless burden if that which he has is sufficient for his needs. A man would be a fool to want more.

"In making these accumulations some men invest in stocks, after careful inquiry into their history and prospects; some put their money into co-operative banks or tenement houses or Liberty Bonds or War Savings Stamps, or various other excellent sources. They have obtained results that are saisfactory to them, and the stories might be of possible service to their associates in directing their minds toward accredited channels of saving and investment."

"MATE" A DRINK USED IN SOUTH AMERICA

For the benefit of the uninitiated first be it known that mate is pronounced with a broad a and the final e pronounced, but not accented—mahtay.

Mate is the Paraguan variety of ordinary holly. The leaves are dried by a certain process and reduced to a finer powder than Oriental tea. The mate may be brewed exactly as tea. But properly it is prepared and drunk in the following manner: The powder is placed in the bottom of a metal cup. In the powder is thrust a bombilla, a tube of tin or silver. At the end of the tube is a bulb perforated with fine holes. Boiling water is poured over the leaves and after a moment the drink is sucked through the bombilla, just as Americans drink their soda water. The natives drink it scalding hot and in great quantities, usually before a meal. The effect is mildly stimulating; to a mate drinker soothing and altogether enjoyable, nearer the effect of tea than coffee, but different from either. The stimulant in mate, as in coffee or tea, is caffeine, but in less quantities and without the astringent properties which make tea and coffee frequently objectionable.

The gaucho, cowboy of the South American pampas, and the wealthy classes of the cities of South America drink mate with equal relish and constancy. There is mate and mate, as many grades as of tea. Relatively little is exported, for the outside world never has learned the habit permanently. Mate when first drunk is not pleasing, but neither is tea nor coffee, for that matter. It has a bitter taste and always is sweetened with sugar and often drunk with lemon. Mate has an extraordinary history. It was the drink of the Paraguan Indians when the Spaniards found them. The first to cultivate the plant were the Jesuit missionaries, and a century ago the drink was known as Jesuit tea. Its cultivation, first confined to Paraguay, has been extended into Southern Brazil, until Brazil produces the bulk of mate. Mate was known in England a century ago; in fact, nearly ran tea out of the market. It was imported in great quantities and was beginning to win over the English—the greatest of European tea drinking peoples. A libel circulated to the effect that mate was more damaging to the health than tea soon caused its defeat on the market. Since then mate drinking has been confined to South America.

Napoleon was interested in mate. His attention was called to the reports of French explorers in South America of the sustaining power of the drink on the native laborers and cowboys. The Emperor is said to have begun experiments with his troops to see whether mate would not produce the same effect on the French grenadier as it did on the Argentine gaucho, when Waterloo ended the tests.

WONDERFUL CLOCKS

In Switzerland are made clocks that do not require hands and faces. The time-piece merely stands in the hall, and one presses a button, which by means of the phonographic internal arrangements call out "Half-past four," or "Five minutes to ten," or whatever the time may be.

A Swiss has invented a remarkable sick-room clock. When a button is pressed an electric lamp behind the dial throws the shadow of the hours and hands magnified upon the ceiling, so that invalids can see it from bed without craning their necks or putting themselves to any inconvenience.

A Dutch shoemaker spent fifteen years of his leisure moments in constructing a clock of the grandfather-shape nearly six feet high, made entirely of straw. The wheels, pointers, case and every detail are exclusively of straw. The clock is said to keep good time.

The clock of the Lyons Cathedral is a wonderful piece of mechanism, and the legend describing it is as follows: The cock crows, the bell sounds the hours, the little bells the Sancta Spiritus, the angel opens the gate to salute the Virgin Mary, the heads of the two lions move the eyes and the tongue, the astrolable shows the hours in its degrees and the movement of the moon. Moreover, the perpetual calendar shows all the days of the year, the feast days and the bissextile. The hours at which the chimes are complete are five and six in the morning, midday, and 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon. The chimes at the other hours are restricted so as not to interfere with the cathedral service.

Complicated indeed is the clock of the Beauvais Cathedral. It is said to be composed of 92,000 separate pieces, according to a French statement. One sees on the fifty-two dial plates the hour, the day, the week and the month, the rising and setting of the sun, the phases of the moon, the tides, the time in the principal capitals of the world, together with a series of terrestrial and astronomical evolutions. The framework is of carved oak, 8 by 5 meters, or 26 by 16¼ feet. When the clock strikes all the edifice seems in movement. The designer wished to depict the last judgment. This wonderful clock is the work of a Beauvaisian, M. Verite. He died in 1887.

THE SALT IN SALT LAKE

A contributor with a mind for statistics, writing for an unnamed exchange of the Pharmaceutical Era, quoted by that paper recently, figures out the following interesting facts about the Great Salt Lake. He says:

"It (the lake) is now about 100 miles long, with an average width of from 25 to 30 miles. It is from 50 to 60 miles wide in some places, and its greatest depth is about 60 feet. Its waters contain about 18 per cent of solid matter, mostly salt and soda, with small proportions of sulphur, lithia and boracic acid. The Asiatic Dead Sea water contains 23 per cent of solids, including less salt and soda and much more magnesia, calcium and potassium than Salt Lake. Atlantic Ocean water holds but 3.5 per cent of solid material, of which salt constitutes 2.6 per cent. Hundreds of thousands of tons of salt are made by natural evaporation along the shores of the lake, and at one place near Salt Lake City a windy night never fails to pile up many tons of soda, eliminated by the movement of the waves.

"Compared with this vast liquid treasure house of riches the greatest bonanza mines of Utah or of the United States dwindle to beggar's penny boxes. Take out your pencil and do a little figuring. Figures, it is said, will not lie, and you will soon find yourself dumfounded before your own mathematical truths.

"Say Salt Lake is 100 miles long and has an average width of 27 miles; that gives an area of 2,700 square miles. There are 27,878,400 square feet in a mile; so the lake has an area of 75,271,680,000 square feet. Take 20 feet as the average depth; then twenty times 75,271,680,000 will give us 1,505,433,900,000 cubic feet as the contents of the lake. Now 16 2-3 per cent, or one-sixth of this, according to the analysis of eminent chemists, is salt and sulphate of soda.

"That is, the lake contains 250,905,600,000 cubic feet of salt and sulphate of soda. Of this mass, one-eighth is sulphate of soda and seven-eighths common salt. A cubic foot of sulphate of soda weighs 50 pounds, and a cubic foot of common salt 80 pounds; so we have as the contents, in part, of this unparalleled reservoir of wealth 1,568,160,000,000 pounds, or 784,080,000 tons of sulphate of soda, and 17,560,339,200,000 pounds, of 8,789,169,600 tons of salt.

THE DINGO

This is the name given to the wild dog of Australia. He is to that country what the wolf is to eastern Europe or the coyote to the United States. Hunting with a pack or alone, he is a constant menace to Australia's chief industry, the breeding of sheep.

Many are the schemes devised for the dingo's extermination, but his capture or death is a comparatively rare occurrence when set against his constant depredations. There are dog trappers who spend their whole time trying to catch dingos, men who have studied every aspect of their work and who spare no pains and avoid no hardship in a continual warfare with the wile and cunning of this sheep slayer.

Although the dingo is met with from time to time in almost every part of the Australian bush, his principal habitat is the rough range country in the center and north of New South Wales and the deep dark scrubs of Queensland.

The dog trapper's life is of the loneliest kind. For weeks, perhaps months, he camps in the desolate ranges, setting his traps and watching with ready rifle in the moonlit night for a chance-shot at the enemy. In the bush there is a price on the head of every dingo. In some parts a dingo is worth ten pounds sterling or even fifteen pounds to the man who delivers his scalp to the pastoral board or to the squatter.

This is made up by sums contributed by the sheep breeders and allowed by the district councils, so generally recognized an enemy is the wild dog. With such handsome emoluments to encurage him, the professional dog trapper is not easily daunted, and his patience and perseverance are remarkable. Some times he may get as many as three or four dogs in a week, but as a rule he is doing very well if he gets three in three months.

For the most part the dingo confines his murderous attacks to sheep and weakening calves, but in the far-out Queensland districts where large packs travel together, hunger has been known to make them bold enough to attack men in their lonely camps after the manner of wolves.

The dingo never barks, but his weird howl is a familiar sound in the bush at night, and is blood-curdling in the extreme, being especially trying to the nerves of the newcomers in the camps. Owing to the dingo's cunning and swiftness in changing quarters, he holds his own in Central Australia and is likely to do so for many a day to come, even though the prices set upon his head, already a general one, should be doubled or trebled.

RAISING A RAILROAD BRIDGE WITHOUT INTERRUPTING TRAFFIC

Last year the War Department ordered the raising of the Pittsburg, Fort Wayne and Chicago railroad bridge over the Allegheny to increase the clearance by 12½ feet and required that the work be done within a year's time. The operation was performed by introducing jacks under the spans and raising the bridge gradually. The jacks were operated only when there were no trains passing, and the work had to be done little by little on a single pier at a time, the operations being carried on consecutively from pier to pier so as to avoid sharp grades. The bridge is a four-track, two-level structure and the truss spans were raised simultaneously by means of hydraulic jacks. The work was recently brought to a successful conclusion within the time specified by the Government.

HOW COUNTERFEITERS ARE CAUGHT

In almost every instance, in spite of all care and all precaution, counterfeiters are eventually run to earth. Why? Three reasons—banks, the Secret Service and system.

In the long run most money in circulation comes into the hands of some bank. And there the counterfeit, good or bad, eventually meets its downfall. Tellers and cashiers handle so much currency that they seem to be gifted with a special sense. Every once in a while, in thumbing over a pile of bills or counting a stack of coins, a teller will stop, scrutinize the thing in his hand and then lay it aside.

Here is where the system comes in. Perhaps he can tell at first glance whether or not the money is bad. If so, he knows what to do. But if he is doubtful he goes to the back of his cage, where a number of periodicals are lying on a desk. There are two monthly counterfeit detecting magazines published in New York City. If the note in his hand is a "ten," issued by the Auburn National City Bank, of Auburn, N. Y., he looks up New York, then Auburn. Perhaps he finds this:

"N. Y., Auburn, Auburn National City Bank. Check Letter A, July 20, 1865. In vignette, lower left corner. Franklin's kite string is broken, or hidden by clouds. In genuine wholly visible. Seal and number poor. Lathe work on back poor."

And this is what he wants to know. If he cannot find a description of the note in the Counterfeit Detector and still thinks it is not genuine, he takes the second step in the working of the system and sends the suspected bill to the magazine, which, for the privilege of looking at it pays him its face value in good money if it turns out to be bad.

The magazine people co-operate with the Secret Service. If the bill is a new counterfeit it is immediately turned over to the government and a description of it is straightway sent out on a postal card to all banks and financial houses with which the magazine is in touch. And the next teller or cashier who gets the mate of the note knows right off what the counterfeit is.

Perhaps it seems only natural, but the great bulk of counterfeit discoveries is made through banks, which communicate immediately with one of the counterfeit detecting magazines or directly with the Secret Service. There is a federal law that requires that any one possessing a United States counterfeit of any sort must notify the Treasury Department at once, under penalty of imprisonment and a heavy fine. The result is that the federal authorities get in touch with every newly discovered counterfeit within a day or two of its detection, with the result again that they are able to start immediately on the track of the men who manufactured the money.

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This is a plain talk of real importance to you because it is absolutely honest and the information is genuine.

You have been losing your hair. It comes out on the comb or brush. The steady loss, as well as the fact that your hair is becoming thinner and weaker, is worrying you.

You have tried different lotions, tonics, washes, etc., that were recommended or which you saw advertised. None of these have done you any good. They were not the right remedy for your hair.

Well, dear Madam, here is a message of good cheer. It comes from a man.

Years ago when I was almost entirely bald I came across an old Cherokee Indian who induced me to try his recipe for growing hair. He told me that the principle of this formula was used by all Indians, male and female, wherever they found a weed of it.

You know that Indian women (and men too) have long, beautiful hair.

So I tried the recipe. The compound was an ointment for the scalp. It had a bad odor and was rather nasty. But my hair grew—and has continued to grow. Since then I have never had any trouble with my hair. At the age of 66 I now possess an abundant growth and visit the barber each month to have it cut. Once, after an accident, when I was compelled to remain in the hospital for several weeks, it grew so long that it was like a woman's flourishing hair growth.

The recipe I obtained from the old Indian savant and it has been used by many others. I have had the formula modernized by a practical chemist so that the cosmetic ointment now has a more pleasant odor and is more agreeable to apply to the scalp and base of the hair.

It contains no alcohol nor any of those ingredients which tend to dry the hair, scalp and roots. On the contrary, it is a fertilizing compound. The Indian principle is that it must contain elements from the three natural Kingdoms. This rule is maintained in the recipe.

I want you to try this cosmetic on your scalp. It can be applied when retiring each night, only a few moments being required. It is likely you will find a very satisfactory result, almost from the outset.

Now make no mistake; this is not a lovely scented preparation. There's nothing fancy about it. The name is Kotalko and you shall have the recipe free of cost by writing for it. Your druggist can supply the cosmetic according to the recipe; or you may obtain the compound from me, ready to use. Send me your name and address. The recipe will come free. If you would like a proof box of the cosmetic, enclose 10 cents, silver or stamps. My address is: John Hart Brittain, BD-101, 150 East Thirty-second St., New York, N. Y.

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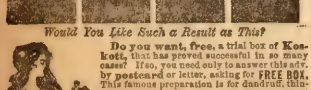

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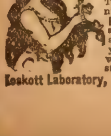

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BUT YOUR NOSE?

BEFORE

AFTER

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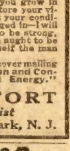

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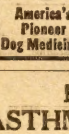

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